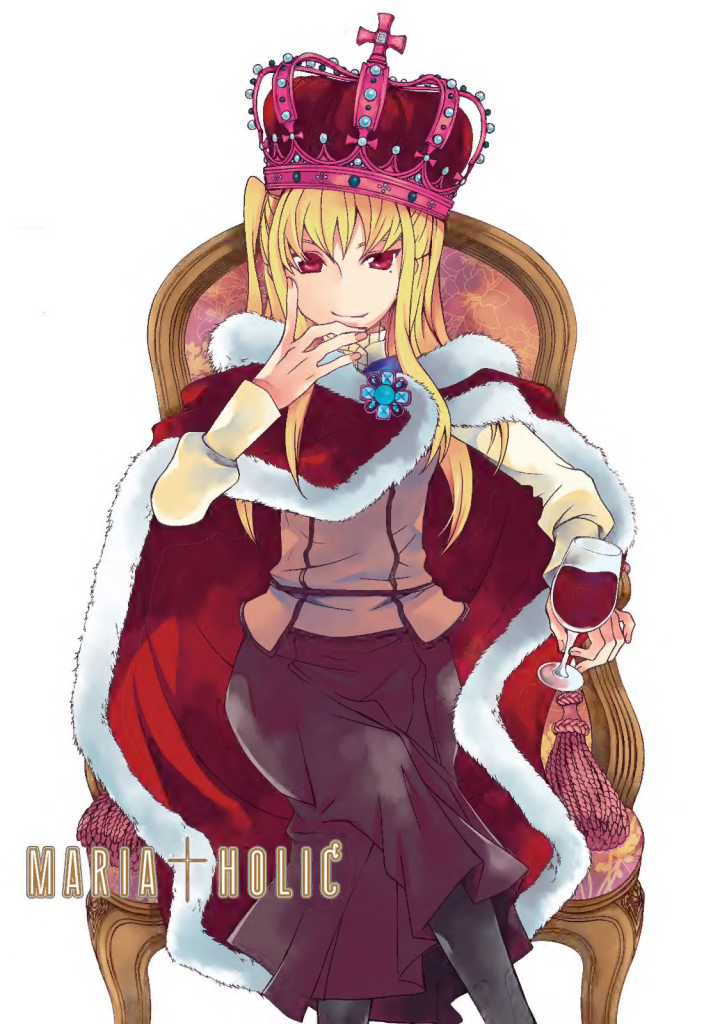
MINARI ENDOU

7

MARIA†HOLIC


MARIA†HOLIC

MARIA HOLIC 7

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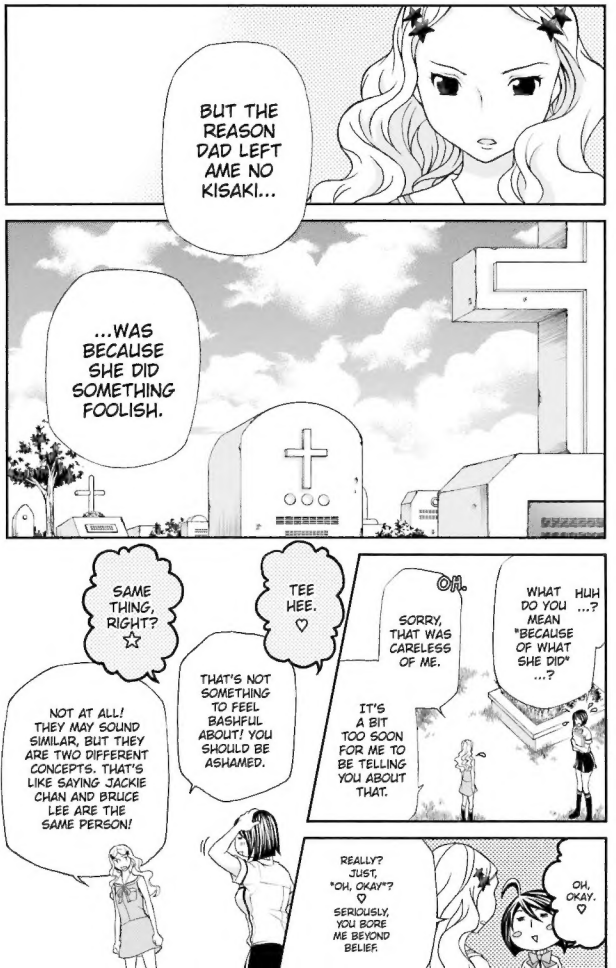
MARIA ✝ HOLIC

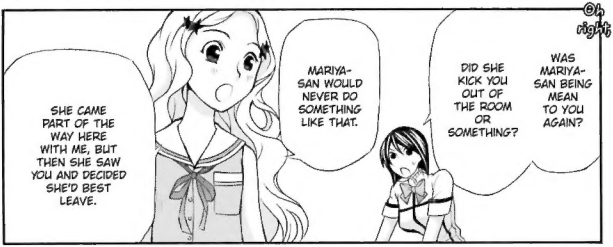
...MIKI TURNED INTO A CHILD WHO DIDN'T CRY.
AFTER MOTHER'S FUNERAL...

SHE DIDN'T LAUGH. SHE DIDN'T GET ANGRY.
SHE DIDN'T SEEM TO BE INTERESTED IN ANYTHING, REALLY.
ALL SHE WOULD DO OCCASIONALLY IS... SHE WOULD BITE HER LIP AS IF SHE WERE STRUGGLING TO HOLD SOMETHING BACK.
SHE'D ALWAYS HAD A WEAK DISPOSITION LIKE OUR MOTHER, BUT SEEING HER LIKE THAT, SHE JUST HAD THIS CUTENESS ABOUT HER.
SQUEEE
SHE BECAME THIS VULNERABLE LITTLE ANGEL THAT SEEMED ON THE VERGE OF BREAKING.
I SWORE THAT, AS HER OLDER SISTER, I'D PROTECT HER.
I'D BE KIND TO HER, AND SPOIL HER, AND WOULDN'T LET ANYONE HURT HER.
AND THEN ONE DAY, I HOPED I'D SEE HER SMILE AGAIN.
AFTER MOM'S FUNERAL, MIKI BECAME MY MOST IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY.

Prayer34
The Tale of the Tear-Stained Photo Album Part ②

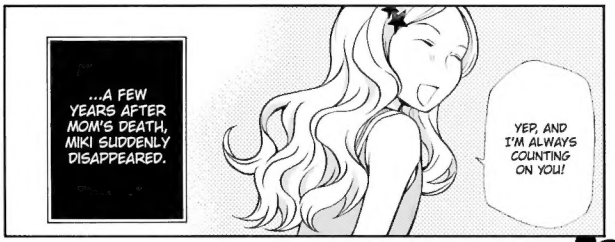

BUT THE REASON DAD LEFT AME NO KISAKI...
...WAS BECAUSE SHE DID SOMETHING FOOLISH.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN "BECAUSE OF WHAT SHE DID" ...?
HUH ...?
OH.
SORRY, THAT WAS CARELESS OF ME.
IT'S A BIT TOO SOON FOR ME TO BE TELLING YOU ABOUT THAT.
OH, OKAY. ♡
REALLY? JUST, "OH, OKAY"? ♡ SERIOUSLY, YOU BORE ME BEYOND BELIEF.
TEE HEE. ♡
THAT'S NOT SOMETHING TO FEEL BASHFUL ABOUT! YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED.
SAME THING, RIGHT? ☆
NOT AT ALL! THEY MAY SOUND SIMILAR, BUT THEY ARE TWO DIFFERENT CONCEPTS. THAT'S LIKE SAYING JACKIE CHAN AND BRUCE LEE ARE THE SAME PERSON!

EVEN THOUGH WE CAME ALL THE WAY HERE, I'VE GOT NO IDEA WHICH GRAVE IS THE RIGHT ONE.
WONDER IF MARIYA-SAN WILL SHOW US TO IT LATER?
I can't believe she chose the fatty...
まさかのデブ…
SPEAKING OF THAT, WHICH OF THEM DO YOU LIKE?
HUH? HOW'D WE GET ON THAT SUBJECT?
ME, I LIKE SAMMO HUNG.
キ!
GAH
CAREFREE STUDY
ゆとり


Oh, right.
SHE CAME PART OF THE WAY HERE WITH ME, BUT THEN SHE SAW YOU AND DECIDED SHE'D BEST LEAVE.
MARIYA-SAN WOULD NEVER DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
DID SHE KICK YOU OUT OF THE ROOM OR SOMETHING?
WAS MARIYA-SAN BEING MEAN TO YOU AGAIN?

By the way, she told me to ask you to send a copy of your essay over to her the other day.
HEH HEH...
A-AND... WHOSE FAULT DOES SHE THINK THAT WAS?
A YOUNG SPROUT
CAREFREE STUDY
ゆとり
I'M GUESSING SHE JUST DIDN'T THINK NOW WAS THE BEST TIME TO MEET, AFTER HAVING THAT TALK ABOUT YOUR GRADUATION ESSAY AND ALL.
ISN'T SHE SO KIND?

I KNOW YOU SAID THAT IT'S "TOO SOON" FOR YOU TO TELL ME SOME THINGS, BUT IF THERE'S ANYTHING BUGGING YOU, YOU CAN TALK TO ME.
I AM YOUR OLDER SISTER, AFTER ALL.
ANYWAY, LET'S JUST GO BACK TO THE DORM.
THE HOUSE MOTHER SAID SHE'D MAKE EXTRA LUNCH, SO I COULD HAVE SOME...
...MIKI?

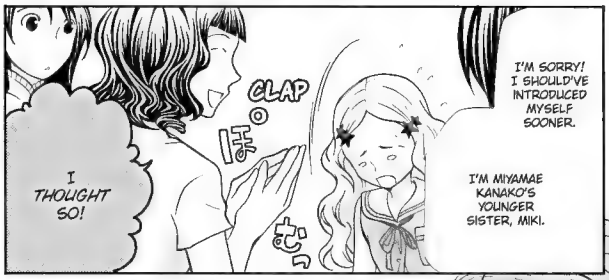

...A FEW YEARS AFTER MOM'S DEATH, MIKI SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED.
YEP, AND I'M ALWAYS COUNTING ON YOU!

I COULDN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF JUST SITTING AROUND, AND FLEW OUT OF THE HOUSE WITH ONLY THE CLOTHES ON MY BACK.
...BUT, I ENDED UP GETTING LOST AND TAKEN IN BY THE POLICE.
HAD SHE RUN AWAY? OR BEEN KIDNAPPED?
熟男
BOLOLOKKA
AMAZONIAN RAMEN
MAH JONG
麻雀
男の泉
BAR
MAN'S OASIS
FOR LOVERS
Where am I?
Him?
...Little girl.
MAN'S

...AND WELL, AFTER BEING OUT IN FREEZING WIND WITHOUT A JACKET OR ANYTHING, I ENDED UP CATCHING A COLD.
IN THE DAYS I SPENT IN BED BEING COMFORTED THROUGH NIGHTMARE AFTER NIGHTMARE, MIKI CAME BACK LIKE NOTHING HAD HAPPENED.
INSTANT COOL
AND AFTER THAT...
SHE BEGAN TO SMILE AGAIN OCCASIONALLY.
SHE STARTED TO SHOW ALL SORTS OF EMOTIONS.
SHE FOUND THINGS SHE LIKED TO DO AND... SHE MADE FRIENDS.
SHE DIDN'T NEED MY PROTECTION ANYMORE. SHE DIDN'T NEED IT AT ALL.
Oh,
GOOD MORNING, MIYAMAE-SAN~

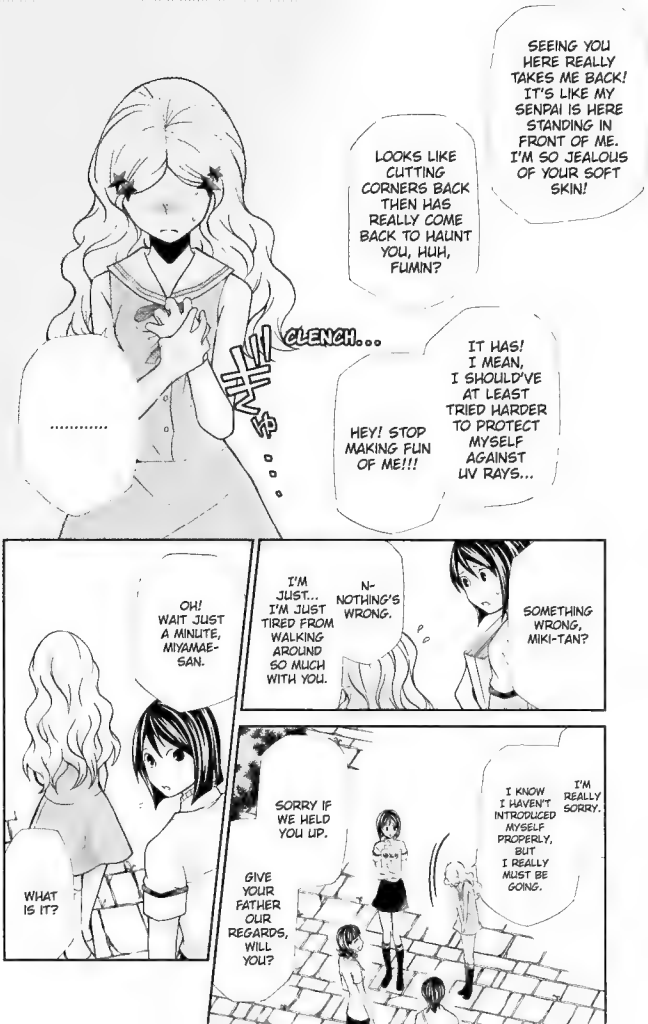
WOW, THAT IS SO COOL!
THAT'S AN ARCHERY UNIFORM, RIGHT?
OH, DO YOU LIKE ARCHERY?
OH?
AND WHO MIGHT YOU BE?

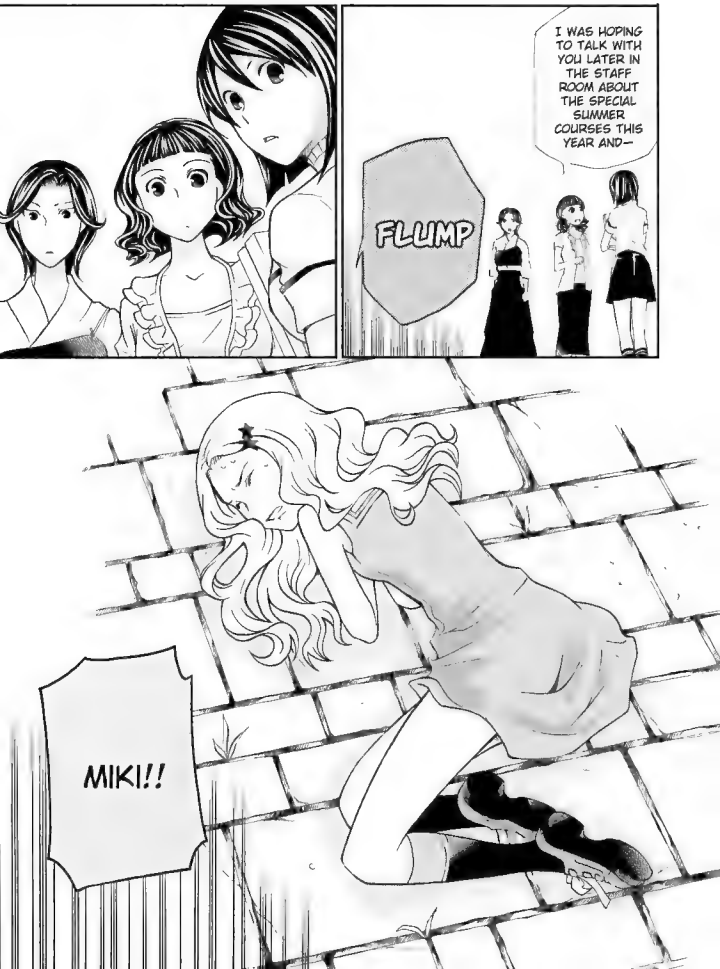
GOOD MORNING MISS TEDDYBEAR, NURSE TONOMURA!
AND A GOOD MORNING TO YOU, TOO.
ANOTHER HOT DAY, IT SEEMS.


I'M SORRY! I SHOULD'VE INTRODUCED MYSELF SOONER.
I'M MIYAMAE KANAKO'S YOUNGER SISTER, MIKI.
CLAP
I THOUGHT SO!

.....
I CAN DEFINITELY SEE YOUR MOTHER IN YOU.
WELL, THEN I GUESS KANAKO LOOKS MORE LIKE YOUR FATHER, HUH?
YOU LOOK JUST LIKE ONE OF MY SENPAI FROM BACK WHEN I WAS IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL!

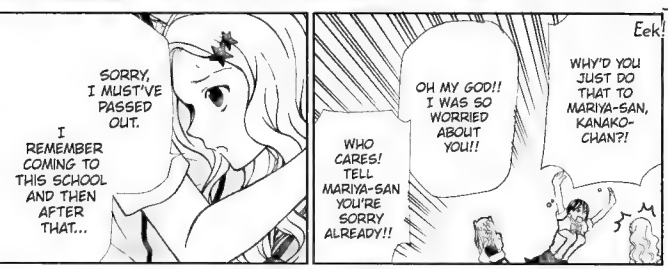
AT ANY RATE, OUR LOOKS REALLY DON'T MATTER. WE ALSO HAVE THE SAME ORGANS AND THE SAME BLOOD TYPE, YOU KNOW!
ARE YOU JUST BEING NICE?
THEY'VE GOT THE SAME HAIR COLOR!
.....
DID IT SEEM LIKE I WAS JUST BEING NICE?
HMM, SHE MUST BE TALKING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED RIGHT AFTER MOM DIED.
?
UM... WELL, I... I'M SORRY, I DON'T.
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES THOUGH...?
OH, I ALMOST FORGOT! MIKI-CHAN, YOU CAME TO THIS ACADEMY A WHILE BACK.
DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME SHOWING YOU AROUND?
YOU TOLD ME THAT I HAD TO TAKE YOU TO MEET WITH THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.
ROLL ROLL
RATTLE RATTLE
That's just the summer heat!!
IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH MY SKIN HAVING WRINKLES!
I'M SWEATING A LOT!
INDEED, FUMIN. YOUR MAKE-UP SMEARS A LOT QUICKER NOW.
WELL... GUESS I'VE AGED A BIT MYSELF.
YOU WERE SO TINY BACK THEN. NOW, JUST LOOK AT HOW YOU'VE GROWN!

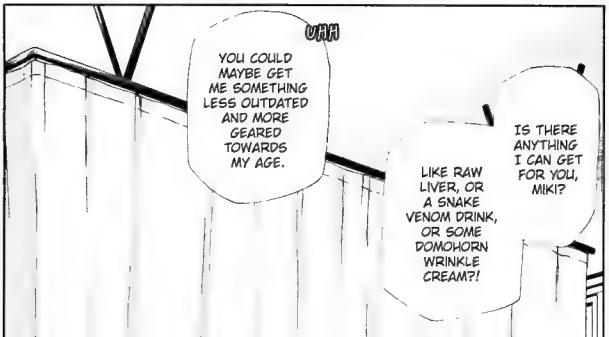

SEEING YOU HERE REALLY TAKES ME BACK! IT'S LIKE MY SENPAI IS HERE STANDING IN FRONT OF ME. I'M SO JEALOUS OF YOUR SOFT SKIN!
LOOKS LIKE CUTTING CORNERS BACK THEN HAS REALLY COME BACK TO HAUNT YOU, HUH, FUMIN?
CLENCH...
IT HAS! I MEAN, I SHOULD'VE AT LEAST TRIED HARDER TO PROTECT MYSELF AGAINST UV RAYS...
HEY! STOP MAKING FUN OF ME!!!
.....
SOMETHING WRONG, MIKI-TAN?
N-NOTHING'S WRONG.
I'M JUST... I'M JUST TIRED FROM WALKING AROUND SO MUCH WITH YOU.
OH! WAIT JUST A MINUTE, MIYAMAE-SAN.
WHAT IS IT?
I'M REALLY SORRY.
I KNOW I HAVEN'T INTRODUCED MYSELF PROPERLY, BUT I REALLY MUST BE GOING.
SORRY IF WE HELD YOU UP.
GIVE YOUR FATHER OUR REGARDS, WILL YOU?

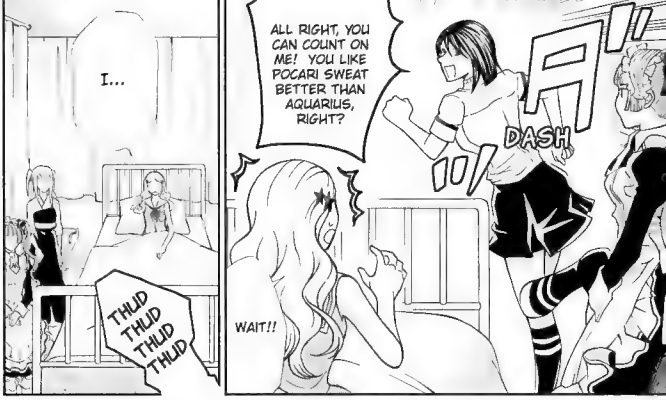

I WAS HOPING TO TALK WITH YOU LATER IN THE STAFF ROOM ABOUT THE SPECIAL SUMMER COURSES THIS YEAR AND—
FLUMP
MIKI!!

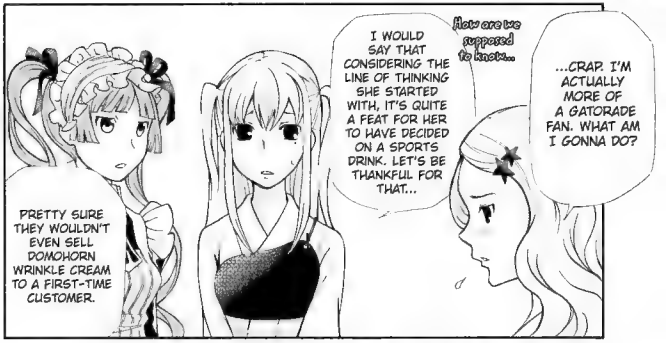
—AND THIS IS WHERE SHE WAS LAID TO REST.
.....
...I HOPE THAT ONE DAY YOU'LL GROW INTO A FINE YOUNG LADY...
...AND FORGIVE THE WOMAN WHO RESTS HERE FOR NEVER ONCE SEEING ANYTHING AS BEAUTIFUL.
WE'LL COME HERE AGAIN TOGETHER AT THAT TIME.
I DO HOPE IT WON'T TAKE TOO LONG...
...AS I'D LIKE TO SEE IT HAPPEN BEFORE I TOO AM LAID TO REST IN THIS EARTH.
...I'M SO SORRY, IRENE-SAMA.

MIKI-TAN!!
WHACK
MIKI-SA...
YOU'VE BEEN WAITING SO LONG AND YET I STILL CAN'T...


SORRY, I MUST'VE PASSED OUT.
I REMEMBER COMING TO THIS SCHOOL AND THEN AFTER THAT...
WHO CARES! TELL MARIYA-SAN YOU'RE SORRY ALREADY!!
OH MY GOD!! I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU!!
Eek!
WHY'D YOU JUST DO THAT TO MARIYA-SAN, KANAKO-CHAN?!


UHH
YOU COULD MAYBE GET ME SOMETHING LESS OUTDATED AND MORE GEARED TOWARDS MY AGE.
LIKE RAW LIVER, OR A SNAKE VENOM DRINK, OR SOME DOMOHORN WRINKLE CREAM?!
IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN GET FOR YOU, MIKI?


I...
THUD THUD THUD THUD
ALL RIGHT, YOU CAN COUNT ON ME! YOU LIKE POCARI SWEAT BETTER THAN AQUARIUS, RIGHT?
WAIT!!
DASH


PRETTY SURE THEY WOULDN'T EVEN SELL DOMOHORN WRINKLE CREAM TO A FIRST-TIME CUSTOMER.
I WOULD SAY THAT CONSIDERING THE LINE OF THINKING SHE STARTED WITH, IT'S QUITE A FEAT FOR HER TO HAVE DECIDED ON A SPORTS DRINK. LET'S BE THANKFUL FOR THAT...
How are we supposed to know...
...CRAP. I'M ACTUALLY MORE OF A GATORADE FAN. WHAT AM I GONNA DO?

THAT'S RIGHT.
BUT WHEN I HEARD THAT SOMEONE RESEMBLING YOU HAD COLLAPSED, I...
FROM THE WAY YOU'RE DRESSED, I'M GUESSING YOU WERE IN THE MIDDLE OF PRACTICE.
I'M REALLY SORRY... FOR MAKING YOU ALL WORRY.

YOU LOOKED SO COOL THAT IT MADE MY HEART POUND.
EVER SINCE THAT DAY, YOU'VE BEEN THIS AMAZING PRINCESS WHO I WANTED TO BE LIKE.
...I REMEMBER SEEING YOU HIT A BULLS-EYE A LONG TIME AGO.
I WANTED TO BE LIKE YOU SO BAD THAT I THOUGHT ABOUT STARTING ARCHERY MYSELF.
I JUST WANTED TO GET CLOSER TO YOU, SOMEHOW.
WHY, WHY DO I HAVE TO BE LIKE HER WHEN IT COMES TO SOMETHING LIKE THIS...
BUT... THEN I WAS TOLD THAT A PERSON'S HEART RATE JUMPS AT THE MOMENT THEY PULL THE ARROW BACK AND THAT WOULD PUT TOO MUCH STRESS ON MY HEART.
MIKI-SAN...

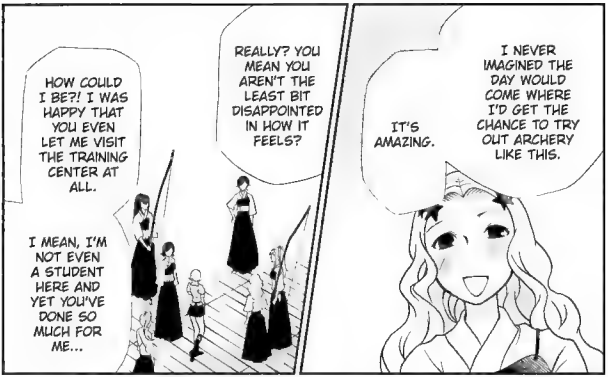
RIP めりめり
RIP
RIP めっ
DO YOU LIKE ARCHERY?
NURSE TONOMURA.
FOO DO WHYNT TRYT?
訳：なら気分だけでも味わってみる？
In English: If you do, why not try it?

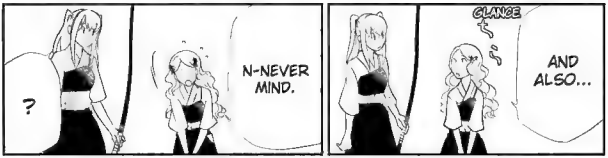
MARIA HOLIC

MARIA HOLIC

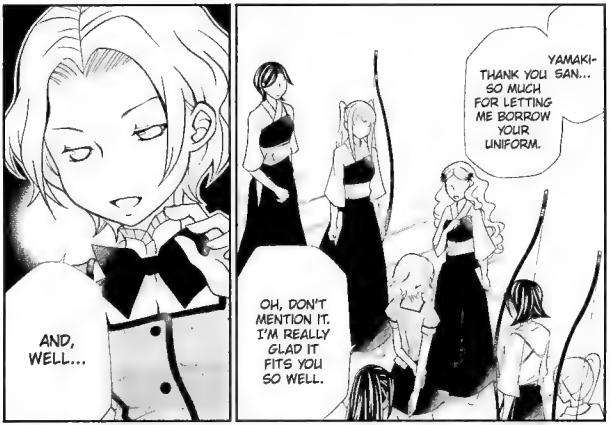
Prayer35
The Tale of the Tear-Stained
Photo Album Part ③

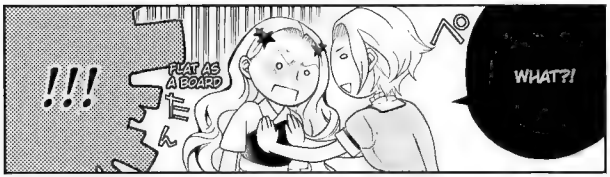
THUD
FORGIVE ME, DEAR MOTHER IN HEAVEN...
...BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS GOING ON?
AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO IS CONFUSED BY ALL OF THIS?
THANK YOU, NURSE TONOMURA!
YOU'RE DOING GREAT.
YOU ARE SO COOL, MIKI-TAN!!

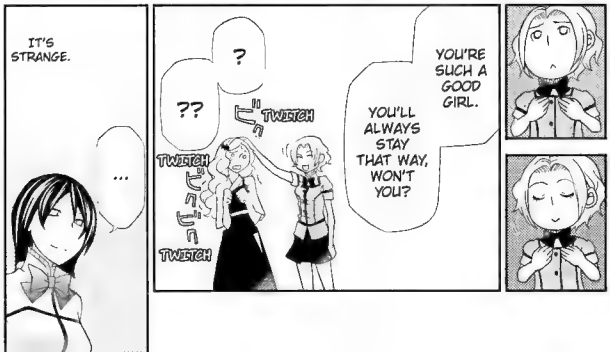

HOW COULD I BE?! I WAS HAPPY THAT YOU EVEN LET ME VISIT THE TRAINING CENTER AT ALL.
I MEAN, I'M NOT EVEN A STUDENT HERE AND YET YOU'VE DONE SO MUCH FOR ME...
REALLY? YOU MEAN YOU AREN'T THE LEAST BIT DISAPPOINTED IN HOW IT FEELS?
IT'S AMAZING.
I NEVER IMAGINED THE DAY WOULD COME WHERE I'D GET THE CHANCE TO TRY OUT ARCHERY LIKE THIS.


?
N-NEVER MIND.
GLANCE
AND ALSO...

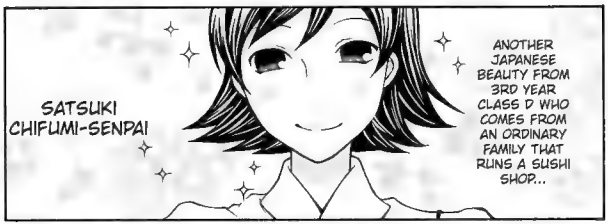
SO... I WENT LOOKING EVERYWHERE, AND EVEN ENDED UP GOING OFF SCHOOL GROUNDS, ON A QUEST TO BUY THE DRINK MY DEAR MIKI WANTED. I WENT ALL THE WAY DOWN THE HILL AND TO A DRUGSTORE IN THE NEARBY RESIDENTIAL AREA TO BUY IT AND, THEN SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPENED?! OH DEAR MOTHER, WHAT'S GOING ON?!
I MEAN... HERE I WAS OUT SEARCHING THE STREETS FOR AN OTSUKA SEIYAKU VENDING MACHINE TO BUY POCARI SWEAT FOR HER, AND BELIEVE ME, THAT WAS NOT AN EASY TASK, AS OTSUKA SEIYAKU HAS NOWHERE NEAR AS MANY VENDING MACHINES AS THE WORLD LEADER, COCA-COLA THAT PUTS OUT THE OTHER POPULAR SPORT DRINK, AQUARIUS.


YAMAKI-SAN... THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR LETTING ME BORROW YOUR UNIFORM.
OH, DON'T MENTION IT. I'M REALLY GLAD IT FITS YOU SO WELL.
AND, WELL...


WHAT?!
FLAT AS A BOARD
!!!


YOU'RE SUCH A GOOD GIRL.
YOU'LL ALWAYS STAY THAT WAY, WON'T YOU?
?
??
TWITCH
TWITCH
TWITCH
IT'S STRANGE.
...

INAMORI YUZURU-SAN
WE HAVE THE PURE JAPANESE BEAUTY OF 2ND YEAR CLASS B...


SATSUKI CHIFUMI-SENPAI
ANOTHER JAPANESE BEAUTY FROM 3RD YEAR CLASS D WHO COMES FROM AN ORDINARY FAMILY THAT RUNS A SUSHI SHOP...

YAMAKI KOMACHI-TAN
YET ANOTHER WHO IS ONE OF THE FEW STUDENTS TO JOIN OUR SCHOOL AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL AND BELONGS TO 1ST YEAR CLASS A...

TSUMUGI BANRI-SENPAI
AND EVEN ONE WHO IS SO BEAUTIFUL THAT NO ONE WOULD CARE IF SHE WERE TO SNAP AT HER REBELLIOUS LITTLE BROTHER IN 3RD YEAR CLASS F...

IT'S JUST A SHAME THAT THE HALF-RUSSIAN BEAUTY MAMADO CVIDANIJA SUZUKA ANNA-TAN ISN'T HERE... NAVSEGDA!
EVEN WITHOUT HER, YOU'VE BASICALLY GOT ALL THE PROMINENT NADESHIKO JAPAN MEMBERS. (INCLUDING THE RESERVES, EXCLUDING THE CROSS-DRESSING MARIYA.)
WHY DON'T I FEEL HAPPY SEEING THE ABSOLUTELY ADORABLE LITTLE MIKI PRANCING AROUND WITHIN RUBBER-BAND GUN FIRING RANGE OF THEM?!

"HEY! KANAKO IS RIGHT HERE YA KNOW!"
I JUST WANT TO SHOUT IT OUT TO THE WORLD ...
WHY DO I FEEL SO LEFT OUT?

自業自得
POOR POCARI.
IT SEEMS THAT MIKI-SAN IS ACTUALLY A FAN OF THE GLOBALLY POPULAR GATORADE.
KANAKO-SAMA...
M-MATSURIKA-SAN...
ARRGGHH!

GAH
I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD BE DOING ANYTHING THAT WOULD DAMAGE THE IMAGE OF THE PRODUCT.

IT'S A PLEASANT DRINK TO MOISTEN EVEN THE MOST DRIED-OUT HEART...
OTSUKA SEIYAKU'S POCARI SWEAT!
POCARI SWEAT IS AN OFFICIAL SPONSOR OF THE JAPANESE YOUTH BASEBALL LEAGUE

THERE, THAT SHOULD KEEP THEM FROM BRINGING A NASTY LITTLE LAWSUIT AGAINST US.
I HOPE SO...
BUT DO TRY TO BE MORE CAREFUL FROM NOW ON.
OH, AND YOU CAN STOP CALLING ME YAMAKI-SAN.
INSTEAD, WHY NOT CALL ME KOMA-CHAN OR EVEN JUST KOMACHI?
YAMAKI-SAN...
I WANT TO WASH THIS BEFORE I GIVE IT BACK TO YOU. IS IT OKAY TO PUT IT IN THE WASHING MACHINE?
IT'S MADE FROM SYNTHETIC FIBERS, SO IT SHOULD BE FINE AS LONG AS YOU USE A DELICATES BAG.
BUT YOU JUST HAD IT ON FOR A MINUTE, SO YOU DON'T REALLY NEED TO WASH IT FOR ME.
THAT'S WHAT ALL MY FRIENDS CALL ME.
WAIT A MINUTE. WHY AM I STILL CALLING YOU "YAMAKI," THEN? AND DOESN'T SHIDOU CALL YOU "KOMACHI-SAN"?
THUMP
MARIYA-CHAN IS SPECIAL BECAUSE SHE'S MY LOVER.
YOUR LOVER...?
OH, NOT THAT AGAIN KOMACHI-SAN...
YOU SAY THAT EVERY CUTE GIRL IS YOUR LOVER.
THAT'S RIGHT ♡ I JUST LOVE CUTE GIRLS!
Oh...
TIW

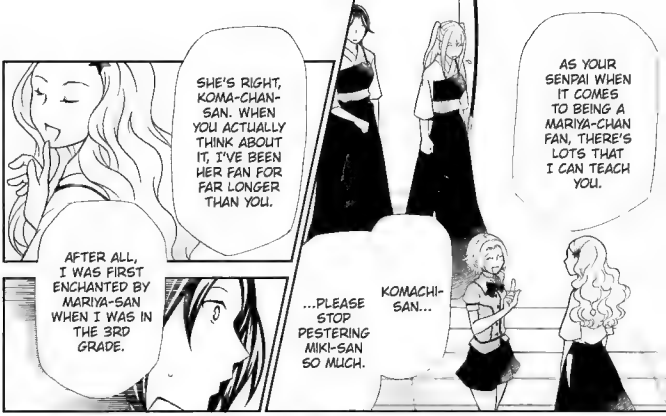
SQUEEZE
GAH!
THAT'S WHY CUTE LITTLE MIKI-TAN HERE IS ALSO MY LOVER!
?!
.....

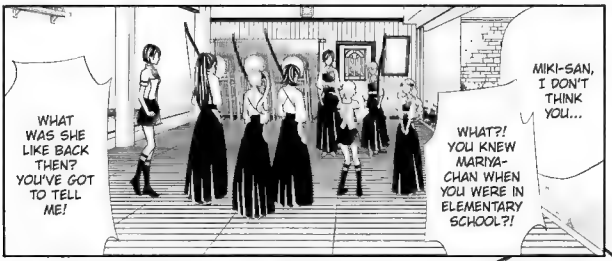
OH MY, LOOKS LIKE SHE'S RESORTED TO PARODYING HERSELF.
Remember that scene from Vol. 2?
...
WELL, THIS SUCKS.

WELL, IF IT'S MAKING YOU FEEL THAT LONELY, WHY NOT GO OVER THERE AND JOIN THEM?
MY DEAR LITTLE MIKI-TAN IS ACTING STRANGE AND MY WHOLE BEING SEEMS TO BE FADING INTO NOTHINGNESS...
EVERYTHING IS MOVING TOO FAST AND I REFUSE TO ACCEPT IT!
SOB
SOB

HEY SHINOUJI, MIYAMAE-SAN, YOU TWO SHOULD COME JOIN US!
ALTHOUGH I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THAT IT SORTA BOTHERS ME THAT I'M THE ONLY ONE SHE USES HONORIFICS WITH...
AHH
"I LOVE YOU," YOU LITTLE SUSHI-SHOP BEAUTY!
Stop being such a jerk-flowers

OH, WHEN DID YOU GET HERE KANAKO-SAN?
Sorry for not noticing.
!!!
MIKI-TAN, YOU'LL BE TAKING YOUR ENTRANCE EXAMS THIS YEAR, WON'T YOU? YOU SHOULD TRY TO GET INTO THIS SCHOOL!
AND THEN YOU CAN BE THE MANAGER OF OUR ARCHERY CLUB!
I'M SURE THAT HAVING YOU AS OUR CUTE LITTLE MASCOT WOULD REALLY HELP MOTIVATE EVERYONE!
Hey!
DON'T GO THROWING A PARTY WITHOUT EVEN ASKING HER WHAT SHE WANTS!
AW MAN, TOO BAD I'LL HAVE ALREADY GRADUATED BY THEN...
WHAT A GREAT IDEA! WE DON'T HAVE A MANAGER YET SO THAT'D BE PERFECT.

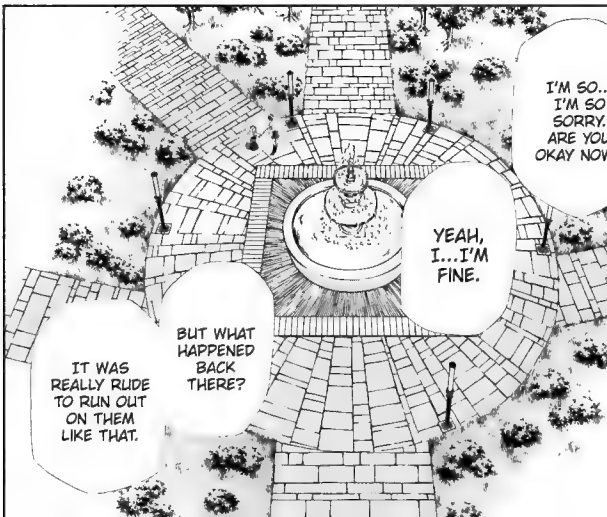

AS YOUR SENPAI WHEN IT COMES TO BEING A MARIYA-CHAN FAN, THERE'S LOTS THAT I CAN TEACH YOU.
SHE'S RIGHT, KOMA-CHAN-SAN. WHEN YOU ACTUALLY THINK ABOUT IT, I'VE BEEN HER FAN FOR FAR LONGER THAN YOU.
KOMACHI-SAN...
...PLEASE STOP PESTERING MIKI-SAN SO MUCH.
AFTER ALL, I WAS FIRST ENCHANTED BY MARIYA-SAN WHEN I WAS IN THE 3RD GRADE.


MIKI-SAN, I DON'T THINK YOU...
WHAT?! YOU KNEW MARIYA-CHAN WHEN YOU WERE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL?!
WHAT WAS SHE LIKE BACK THEN? YOU'VE GOT TO TELL ME!

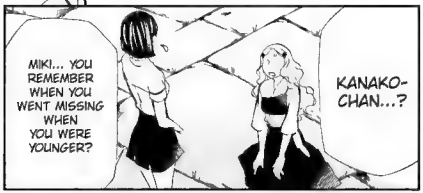
WELL, BACK THEN, SHE WAS JUST AS CHARMING A YOUNG...

KANAKO-CH...
HUH? DON'T PULL ME LIKE THAT!
I-
I'M SORRY EVERYONE! I'VE GOT TO GO NOW!!
KANAKO-CHAN...
KANAKO-CHAN, I SAID STOP!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHAT'S GOT YOU SO ANGRY?!
L-LET GO OF ME!
HEE
HEE
I CAN'T, I CAN'T BREATHE...


I'M SO... I'M SO SORRY. ARE YOU OKAY NOW?
YEAH, I...I'M FINE.
BUT WHAT HAPPENED BACK THERE?
IT WAS REALLY RUDE TO RUN OUT ON THEM LIKE THAT.

DID YOU... DID YOU MEET MARIYA BACK THEN?

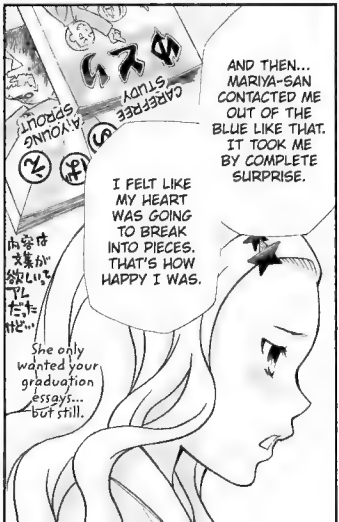

MIKI... YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU WENT MISSING WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER?
KANAKO-CHAN...?

... I TOLD YOU. IT'S TOO SOON TO-
THERE IS NO TOO SOON ABOUT IT! I WANT YOU TO TELL ME NOW!!

IT SEEMED LIKE A TOUCHY SUBJECT, SO I DID MY BEST NOT TO BRING IT UP ALL THIS TIME...
BUT WHERE DID YOU GO? WHAT DID YOU DO THERE?
WHY DID YOU DISAPPEAR LIKE THAT?

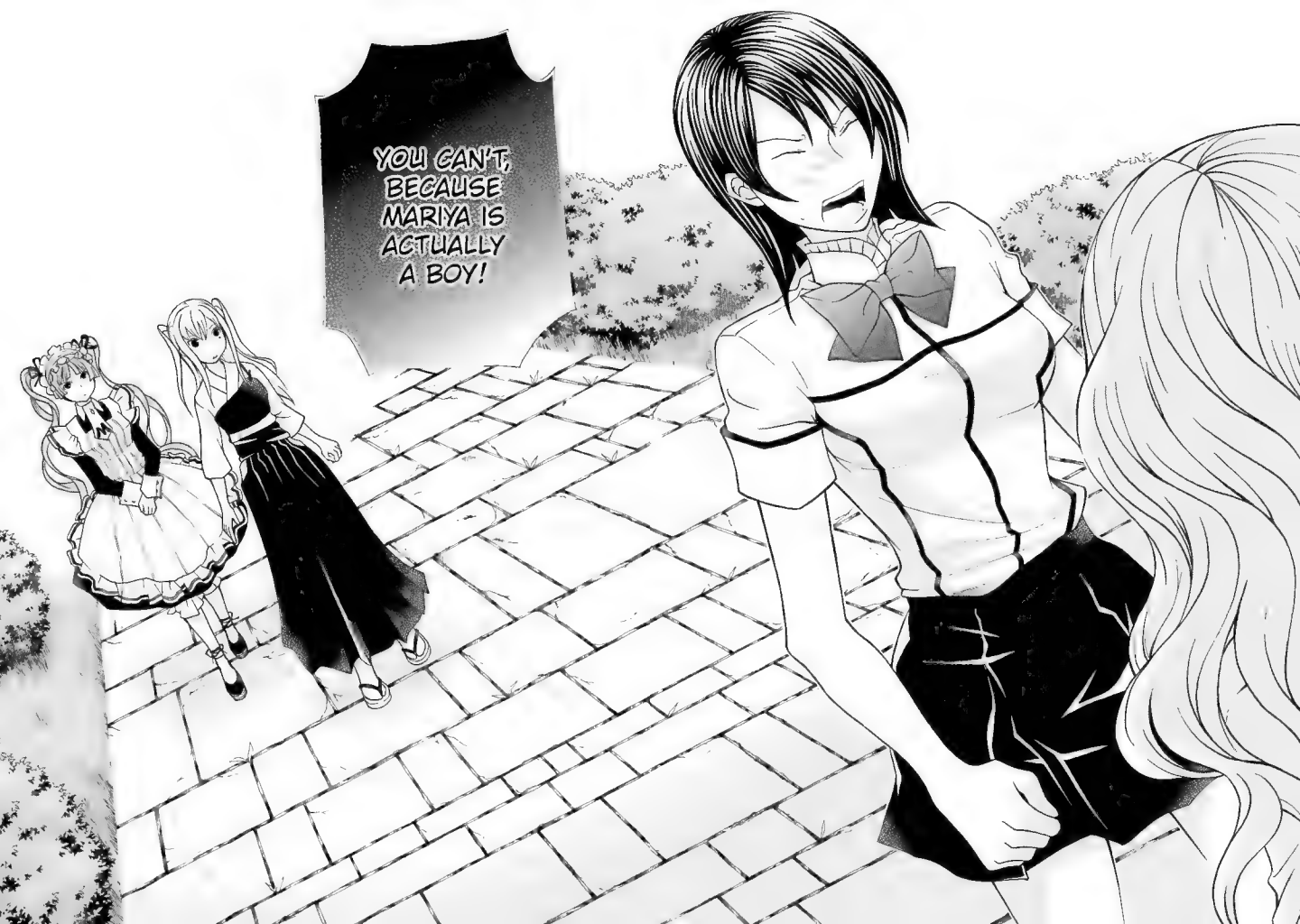
.....
I DID MEET HER.
Ack
THAT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS!
Crap, she saw me.
LIKE BACK THERE IN THE CLUB ROOM. YOU NEVER WOULD'VE COME OVER AND JOINED US IF SATSUKI HADN'T SAID SOMETHING. AM I RIGHT?
BUT THE TIMING IS IMPORTANT WHEN IT COMES TO THINGS LIKE THIS.

THERE, I SAID IT. THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY?
THAT DAY, MARIYA-SAN AND IRENE-SAMA TOOK ME INTO THEIR CARE.


AND THEN... MARIYA-SAN CONTACTED ME OUT OF THE BLUE LIKE THAT. IT TOOK ME BY COMPLETE SURPRISE.
I FELT LIKE MY HEART WAS GOING TO BREAK INTO PIECES. THAT'S HOW HAPPY I WAS.
She only wanted your graduation essays... but still.

EVER SINCE THAT DAY, I'VE LOOKED UP TO THE TWO OF THEM. I WANT TO BE JUST LIKE THEM.
I HELD MYSELF BACK FROM CALLING OR EVEN WRITING LETTERS TO THEM. I WANTED TO MAKE MYSELF WAIT UNTIL I FELT MORE CONFIDENT.

TREMBLE
ふるっ！
...YOU CAN'T.
SOMETHING SWEET LIKE COTTON CANDY THAT ...
THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT MIKI'S EXPRESSION...
...AND THE WAY SHE LOOKED AT MARIYA...
...THAT MADE ME UNEASY.
Oh?
THERE THEY ARE.
YOU JUST CAN'T!
I CAN'T WHAT?
YOU CAN'T GO SWOONING OVER HER AND MAKING SAD FACES LIKE THAT!
YOU CAN'T GO FALLING MADLY IN LOVE WITH HER, YOU JUST CAN'T!
WHAT THE HELL ARE THEY RAGING AT OVER THERE?!
THOSE IDIOTS ARE SO TROUBLE-SOME.


YOU CAN'T, BECAUSE MARIYA IS ACTUALLY A BOY!

OH...
OHH
SHIIIIT!!!

MARIA HOLIC

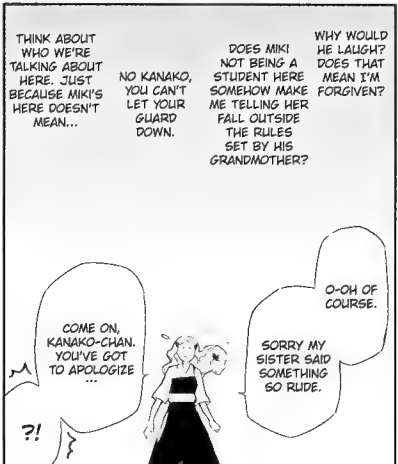
YOU CAN'T, BECAUSE MARIYA IS ACTUALLY A BOY!

Prayer 36
The Tale of the Tear-Stained
Photo Album, Part ④

THE ENEMY AP-PROACHES !!
THE WAY KANAKO KNEW TO PREPARE HERSELF FOR THE APPROACHING ENEMY...
...COULD BEST BE LIKENED TO THE WAY A WILD ANIMAL'S INSTINCTS HELP IT DO THE SAME.
RAWWRRR
ズオオオオ
THE FACT THAT THE ANGRY BEAST CHARGING TOWARDS HER WAS IN POSSESSION OF A STRENGTH OUT OF THE ORDINARY...
...AND THAT KANAKO'S INTUITION HAPPENED TO BE A LOT CLEARER ON THAT PARTICULAR DAY MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY UNRELATED.

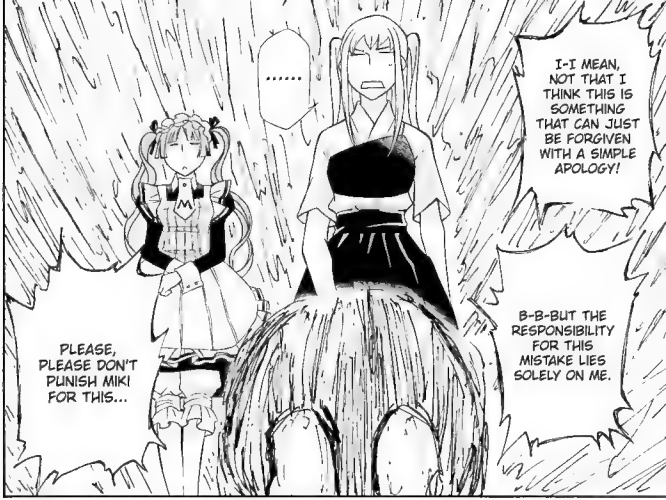
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
I'M GONNA DIE!
I...UM... I... WELL...

TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TH-TH-TH-THERE'S AN E-EXPLANATION FOR THIS...
THUD
THUD
THUD


THINK ABOUT WHO WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HERE. JUST BECAUSE MIKI'S HERE DOESN'T MEAN...
NO KANAKO, YOU CAN'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN.
DOES MIKI NOT BEING A STUDENT HERE SOMEHOW MAKE ME TELLING HER FALL OUTSIDE THE RULES SET BY HIS GRANDMOTHER?
WHY WOULD HE LAUGH? DOES THAT MEAN I'M FORGIVEN?
COME ON, KANAKO-CHAN. YOU'VE GOT TO APOLOGIZE ...
?!
O-OH OF COURSE.
SORRY MY SISTER SAID SOMETHING SO RUDE.

WAS THAT A LAUGH?!
OH, KANAKO-SAN...
HEH
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE STILL TELLING THAT JOKE.

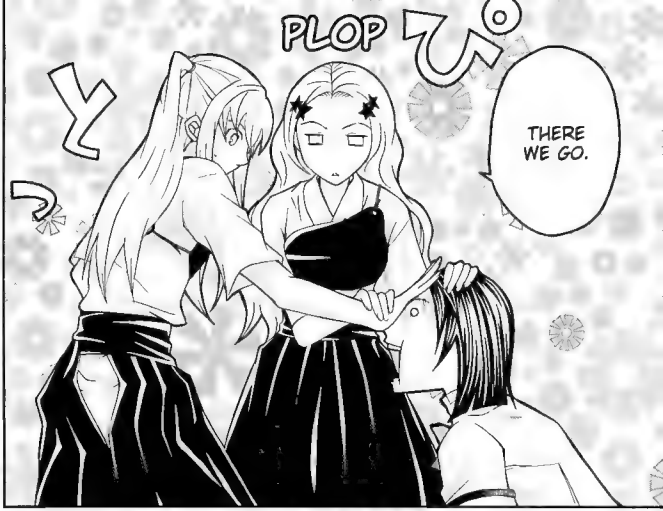
HOLDING MY PALMS OUT LIKE THIS...
KANAKO-CHAN?!
...WAS MY DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO PROVE THAT I HAD MEANT NO HARM IN TELLING MIKI MARIYA'S SECRET.
AND MARIYA KNEW THAT.
PLEASE FIND IT IN YOUR HEART TO FORGIVE ME...
PLEASE.


.....
I-I MEAN, NOT THAT I THINK THIS IS SOMETHING THAT CAN JUST BE FORGIVEN WITH A SIMPLE APOLOGY!
B-B-BUT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS MISTAKE LIES SOLELY ON ME.
PLEASE, PLEASE DON'T PUNISH MIKI FOR THIS...

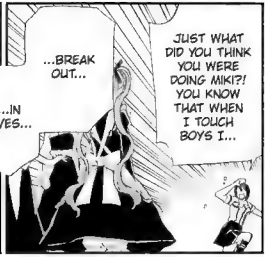
HERE I WAS TRYING TO MAKE LIGHT OF THE SITUATION, AND NOW YOU'RE THE ONE CAUSING A SCENE...
Oh, my
YOU ARE TOO MUCH SOMETIMES, KANAKO-SAN.
STOP SHAKING, YOU STUPID LITTLE ANT!
HEH
HEH

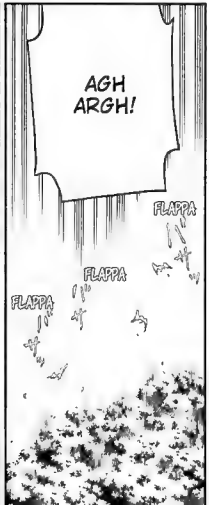
WEREN'T YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING HER, KANAKO-SAN?
SUZUKA ANNA-SAN SHOULD BE ARRIVING TO THE CLUB ROOM SOON, SO WE'D BETTER HURRY.
JUST SHUT UP ALREADY OR I'LL GLUE YOUR MOUTH SHUT!
SERIOUSLY, ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS SHUT UP AND FOLLOW ME LIKE THE LITTLE DUCKLING YOU ARE!
A-ARE YOU SAYING YOU FORGIVE ME?!
I'M SURE EVERYONE IS WORRIED RIGHT NOW.
NOW, LET'S NOT STAND AROUND CHATTING FOREVER. WE SHOULD HEAD BACK.
AH

PAH
OH, I GET IT NOW! MARIYA'S JUST TRYING TO COVER FOR ME!
RIGHT RIGHT. MARIYA'S NOT A BOY AT ALL!
NOPE. I MEAN, EVEN IF SHE TOUCHES ME, I WON'T BREAK OUT IN HIVES.
AND THAT'S BECAUSE SHE IS NOT A BOY.
...MARIYA-SAN?
YES?
THANK YOU FOR GIVING FOOLISH ME A SECOND CHANCE!
UH... OKAY...
OF COURSE SHE... ISN'T?
YOU GOT THAT, MIKI-TAN? MARIYA IS MOST DEFINITELY NOT A BOY.


PLOP
ぷっ
とっ
THERE WE GO.

...IN HIVES...
...BREAK OUT...


JUST WHAT DID YOU THINK YOU WERE DOING MIKI?! YOU KNOW THAT WHEN I TOUCH BOYS I...


AGH ARGH!
FLAPPA
FLAPPA
FLAPPA

しん。。。
SILENCE

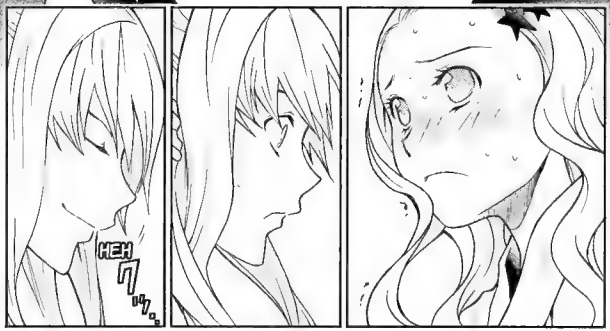
KANAKO-CHAN...
MATSURIKA-SAN...
WOULD YOU GIVE ME SOME TIME ALONE WITH MARIYA-SAN, PLEASE?
.....
I...
は
DAAAH!
I THINK YOU SHOULD JUST TRY AND RELAX FOR NOW, KANAKO-SAMA.
AFTER ALL, WHAT WILL HAPPEN WILL HAPPEN.
BAM
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
POW
BZZZKT
FIDGET
FIDGET
FIDGET
FIDGET
FIDGET
I REALLY SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT HER ALONE WITH THAT DEVIL, SHOULD I?
AHH... I WONDER IF MIKI'S OKAY.

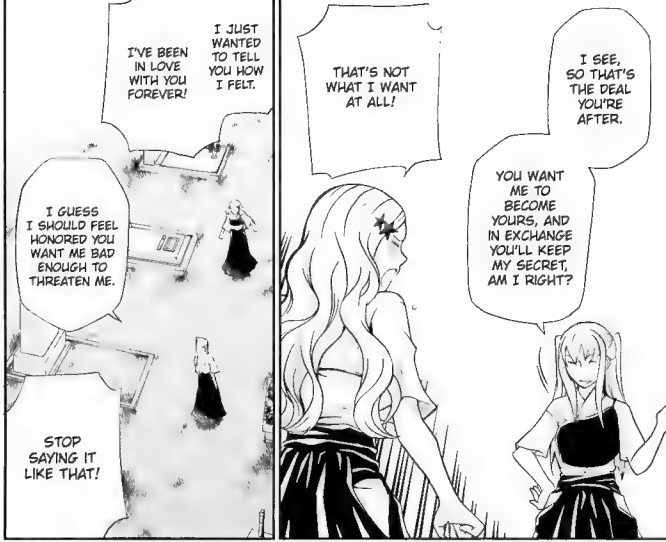
MATSURIKA-SAN, DO YOU REALLY NOT MIND LEAVING MARIYA ALONE LIKE THAT?
SINCE MARIYA HIMSELF ASKED IT OF ME, I SEE NO PROBLEM WHAT SO ALLY-OO.
GO, HYPER DIMENSION SPECIAL ATTACK PENGUIN SHOOT!
Yeah!
BOING
TAP
WHAM
TIP
SLASH
FOOO
I MIGHT AS WELL TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK THROUGH MY MOTHER'S ALBUM...
SINCE I'VE GOT NOTHING BETTER TO DO...
Memories
THIS ALBUM HAS...
HUH...?
WHY ARE YOU TALKING SO STRANGELY, MATSURIKA-SAN?
AW, HE WAS JUST LYING ABOUT BEING AN ALIEN.
WHAT A SHOCKLY-OO.
DOO

.....
WHAT WAS IT THAT YOU WANTED TO TALK ABOUT, MIKI-SAN?
I... WELL, I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN.
THIS PLACE IS FILLED WITH SO MANY MEMORIES... AND IT'S ALSO IRENE-SAMA'S FINAL RESTING PLACE.
I JUST... I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S THE MOST SUITABLE PLACE TO TALK ABOUT THINGS LIKE...

OKAY, OKAY.
I'M A BOY, WHO DRESSES LIKE A GIRL, AND ATTENDS AN ALL GIRLS' SCHOOL.
THAT GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU?
SO, UM... ARE YOU GAY?
YOU'RE NOT, RIGHT?
DO I LOOK GAY?!
NOT REALLY...
I... WELL, I WON'T ASK YOU WHY.
AND I WON'T TELL ANYONE ELSE.
SO... WAS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANTED TO SAY?
THANK YOU FOR THAT.
I... I'VE DECIDED TO ATTEND THIS SCHOOL.
HUH?
BUT YOUR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IS DIRECTLY CONNECTED TO YOUR HIGH SCHOOL, ISN'T?
PLUS, YOUR SCHOOL IS A HIGHER LEVEL. IT'D BE A WASTE FOR YOU TO COME HERE
MY FATHER WANTED ALL OF HIS DAUGHTERS TO ATTEND AME NO KISAKI FROM THE VERY BEGINNING...
...SO I'M SURE IT'D MAKE HIM INCREDIBLY HAPPY IF I TOLD HIM OF MY DESIRE TO COME HERE.
AND THEN, I'LL JOIN THE ARCHERY CLUB.
IF THAT HAPPENS-

PLEASE SAY YOU'LL GO OUT WITH ME!


HEH


I'VE BEEN IN LOVE WITH YOU FOREVER!
I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU HOW I FELT.
I GUESS I SHOULD FEEL HONORED YOU WANT ME BAD ENOUGH TO THREATEN ME.
STOP SAYING IT LIKE THAT!
THAT'S NOT WHAT I WANT AT ALL!
I SEE, SO THAT'S THE DEAL YOU'RE AFTER.
YOU WANT ME TO BECOME YOURS, AND IN EXCHANGE YOU'LL KEEP MY SECRET, AM I RIGHT?

I SEE YOU ALL THE TIME, EVEN WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES.
I SEE YOU STANDING TALL WITH YOUR UNWAVERING EYES...
I'VE LONGED TO BE JUST LIKE YOU.

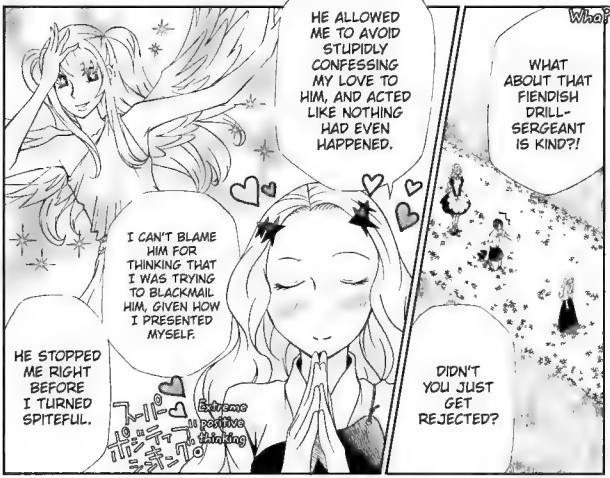
IF THAT'S THE CASE, DON'T YOU THINK IT'S BEST FOR THE BOTH OF US IF WHAT YOU WANT STAYS FAR OUT OF YOUR REACH AND YOU CAN GO ON GAZING AT IT?
.....
I WENT OVER MY FEELINGS FOR YOU IN MY MIND AGAIN AND AGAIN, TRYING TO DECIDE IF THEY WERE JUST ADMIRATION OR SOMETHING ELSE.
I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE I EVER IMAGINED THAT YOU...
...WERE ACTUALLY A BOY.

I THINK... YOU'RE JUST UPSET THAT YOU FOUND OUT THAT THE PERSON YOU BELIEVED TO BE A GIRL ALL THIS TIME IS ACTUALLY A BOY.

GO BACK TO THE DORM. EAT, TAKE A BATH, AND GET SOME REST.
THEN WE CAN TALK ABOUT THIS, ALL RIGHT?

??!!
I WATCHED MY LITTLE SISTER'S HEART GET TORN TO PIECES!
I SAW IT ALL!
OH MY.
I'M NOT THE HOUSEKEEPER, BUT I MOST CERTAINLY JUST SAW SOMETHING I SHOULDN'T HAVE.
WIGGLE
ひょっ
NO, RIGHT NOW I NEED TO FOCUS ON HEALING MIKI'S HEART THAT'S BEEN SHATTERED LIKE GLASS...
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE WAS SO HEARTLESS! WHEN I GET MY HANDS ON THAT LITTLE FIEND, I'M GONNA...
RUSH
You're so mean, Matsurika-san!!
WHY DIDN'T YOU LET ME GO BEFORE THINGS ENDED SO TRAGICALLY FOR HER?!
I'M SURE THINGS WOULD HAVE TURNED OUT IN A MUCH MORE CATASTROPHIC MANNER IF I HAD LET YOU GO OVER THERE.
WIGGLE
ひょっ

MIKI-TAN!
IF YOU KEEP ON WALKING AROUND WITH YOUR HEAD DOWN LIKE THAT, YOU'LL FIND NOTHING BUT SMALL CHANGE.
RIGHT NOW YOUR FUTURE AND YOUR DREAMS MAY BE MILES AWAY...
...BUT WHEN YOU CROSS THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT LONG, LONG TUNNEL, YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF AT YODOBASHI CAMERA AND...
...YOU SAW IT ALL, DIDN'T YOU?
I... I'M SORRY.
YOU'RE THE WORST.
I WAS JUST SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU THAT I-
SLUMP
.....
The worst...
MARIYA-SAN, THOUGH... HE'S JUST SO KIND.


HE ALLOWED ME TO AVOID STUPIDLY CONFESSING MY LOVE TO HIM, AND ACTED LIKE NOTHING HAD EVEN HAPPENED.
I CAN'T BLAME HIM FOR THINKING THAT I WAS TRYING TO BLACKMAIL HIM, GIVEN HOW I PRESENTED MYSELF.
HE STOPPED ME RIGHT BEFORE I TURNED SPITEFUL.
スーパーポジティブシンキング
Extreme positive thinking
Who?!
WHAT ABOUT THAT FIENDISH DRILL-SERGEANT IS KIND?!
DIDN'T YOU JUST GET REJECTED?

OH...
I ALMOST FORGOT! TAKE A LOOK AT THIS, MIKI!
Memoire
URPH
FROM MY POINT OF VIEW, IT LOOKED MORE LIKE HE WAS TRYING TO AVOID GETTING INTO SOME TRICKY SORT OF LOVE AFFAIR WITH YOU BY DODGING THE QUESTION.

WHERE EXACTLY IS THAT POCKET?
JUST FROM THAT POCKET ALL OF US GIRLS HAVE, WHY?
Wha...
WHERE DID YOU JUST PULL THAT FROM...?

...ANYWAY, WHAT ABOUT THAT ALBUM?
DID YOU LOOK THROUGH IT?
.....
YOU HAVEN'T, AM I RIGHT?
Memories
LET'S LOOK THROUGH IT TOGETHER!
PLEASE, I'M ASKING THIS AS YOUR SISTER!

Prayer37
The Tale of the Tear-Stained Photo Album Part ⑤

FWIP
DO YOU THINK THAT WAS ALL PART OF YOUR FATHER'S PLAN?

Maid mode: ON
I WONDER. I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE THINGS HAVE GOTTEN TO THE POINT WHERE HE'S SO DESPERATE AS TO HEDGE HIS BETS LIKE THAT.
I THINK HE WAS PROBABLY JUST HOPING HE'D GET LUCKY AND SHE'D SPOT IT WHILE SHE WAS HERE.

OH, YOU MEAN THAT MIKI-SAMA WILL EVENTUALLY ACCEPT HER MOTHER IN SOME WAY?

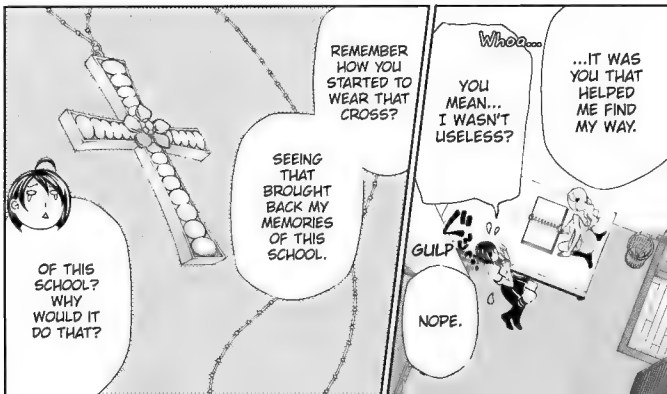
Memo
STILL... HE DID CHOOSE THAT ALBUM AFTER HEARING KANAKO WANTED TO SEE PICTURES OF HER MOTHER.
HE MUST STILL BE GETTING HIS HOPES UP A LITTLE.

HERE'S THE VIRGIN MARY GIVING HER BLESSINGS TO US.
WHAT'S...?
AME NO KIBAKI GIRLS' SCHOOL
DLE AND HIGH SCHOOL
ARE THESE... PICTURES OF ME?
It's like a high school kid's scrap book...
THE ALBUM MUST'VE BEEN PUT TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE YOUR BIRTH. YOU'RE SO CUTE! ♡
MAN, I CAN'T BELIEVE DAD HAD SOMETHING LIKE THIS...
OH, MIKI. JUST LOOK AT YOU HAVING YOUR FIRST BATH. YOU LOOK JUST LIKE THE VENUS DE MILO.
THIS IS A MILLION DOLLAR PICTURE!

WOW, EVERY PICTURE HAS A COMMENT ATTACHED TO IT.
I HAVEN'T SEEN MY OWN ALBUM. I WONDER IF IT'S AS AMAZING AS THIS ONE?
ARE YOU SERIOUSLY TRYING TO WIN ME OVER WITH THIS?
I-I, NO NOT AT ALL!!
THERE WAS... A MAN AT HER FUNERAL SAYING SOME THINGS...
...ABOUT HOW DAD HAD GOTTEN INVOLVED WITH ONE OF HIS STUDENTS AND THAT'S WHY HE WAS FIRED.
...BUT IT WOULDN'T BE A BAD THING IF YOU DID START TO LOVE MOM, EVEN JUST A LITTLE.

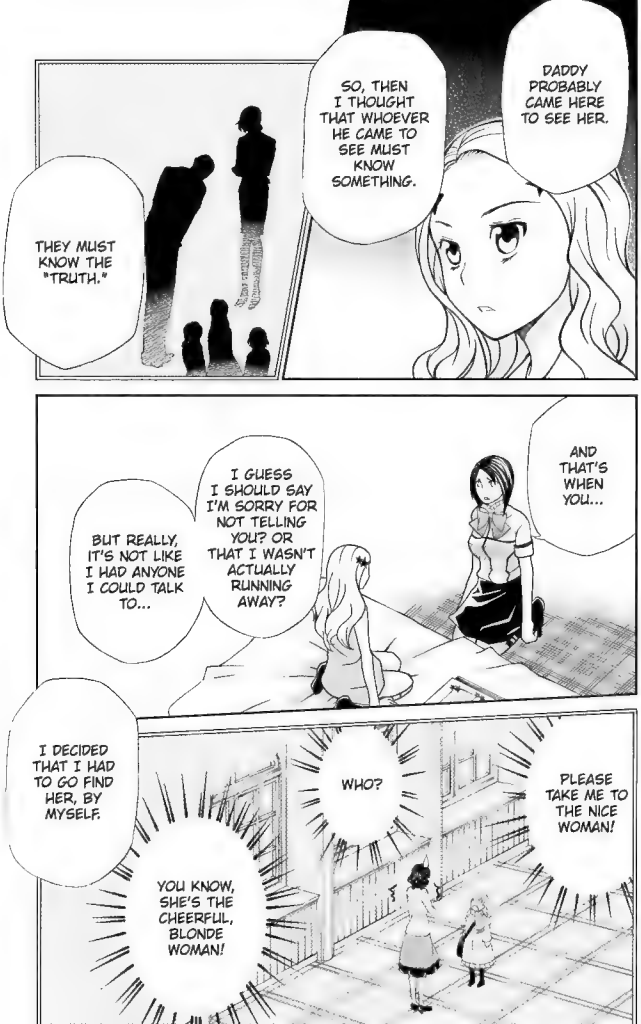
"ARE YOU A BAD PERSON, DADDY?"
IT'S NOT AS IF I COULD JUST ASK HIM. AND YUME-CHAN TOLD ME TO JUST "FORGET ABOUT IT."
OF COURSE, AS A CHILD I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE EXACT MEANING OF WHAT HE WAS SAYING.
BUT... I HAD THIS INKLING THAT IT WAS SOMETHING BAD.
OH
AND OF COURSE BY "STUDENT" THEY MEANT, WELL, "YOU KNOW WHO."
WHAT...?
I WAS SO CONFUSED AND TIME, WELL, IT JUST KEPT PASSING.
I STARTED TO FEEL CONTEMPT FOR HIM, EVEN AS I TOLD MYSELF TO TRUST HIM.
AND I BEGAN TO HATE MYSELF.

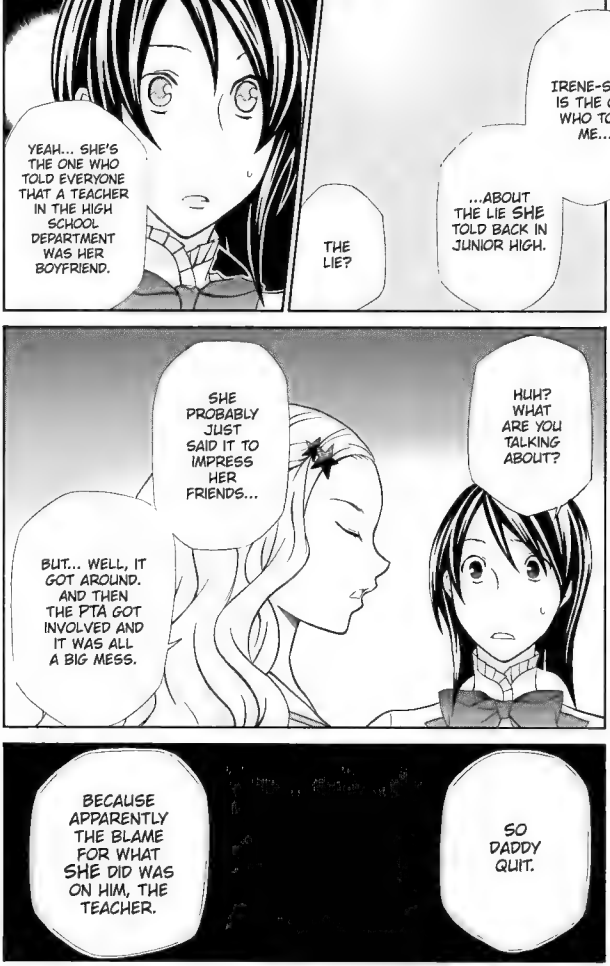
I...
I DIDN'T KNOW.
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT YOU WERE STRUGGLING ALL THIS TIME.
I WAS SO BUSY FAWNING OVER YOU THAT I NEVER ACTED LIKE A BIG SISTER SHOULD...
She sounds rather restless and yet...
なにか不穏な
言葉がきこえた気がしたけど
...
HNNGH
Whaa—
Aaa?!
YOU DON'T NEED TO START CRYING YET!


REMEMBER HOW YOU STARTED TO WEAR THAT CROSS?
SEEING THAT BROUGHT BACK MY MEMORIES OF THIS SCHOOL.
OF THIS SCHOOL? WHY WOULD IT DO THAT?
Whoa...
YOU MEAN... I WASN'T USELESS?
...IT WAS YOU THAT HELPED ME FIND MY WAY.
GULP
NOPE.

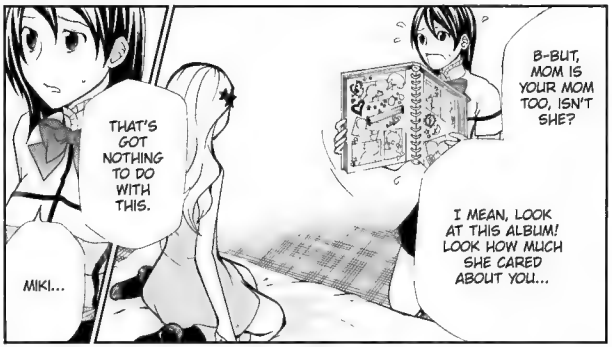
WELL, THIS WAS WHERE YOU GOT IT, WASN'T IT?
HUH?
HM... I GUESS IT WAS.
...I NEVER WOULD'VE GUESSED THAT YOU'D FORGOTTEN SOMETHING LIKE THAT...

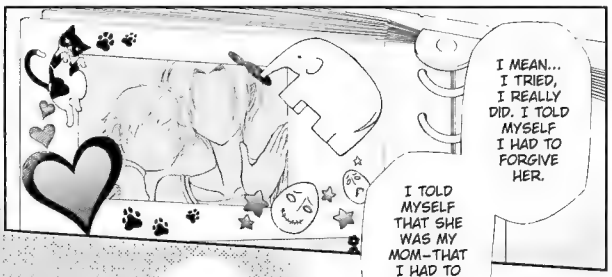
...REMEMBER, WE CAME HERE...
...AFTER SHE PASSED AWAY?
YEAH... WE MUST HAVE.
I MEAN, MISS TEDDYBEAR MENTIONED IT EARLIER. BUT IT DOESN'T RING ANY BELLS FOR ME...
WOW.
I'VE BEEN A LOSER ALL ALONG.
Huh...
You kept showing something about divine punishment...
OH, SO I DID...
FLASH
...WOW. AND HERE YOU WERE, BRAGGING ALL THE WAY HOME ABOUT HOW THE CROSS WAS A PRESENT FROM YOUR "PRINCE," WHICH WAS...
...TOTALLY INAPPRO-PRIATE.


DADDY PROBABLY CAME HERE TO SEE HER.
SO, THEN I THOUGHT THAT WHOEVER HE CAME TO SEE MUST KNOW SOMETHING.
THEY MUST KNOW THE "TRUTH."
AND THAT'S WHEN YOU...
I GUESS I SHOULD SAY I'M SORRY FOR NOT TELLING YOU? OR THAT I WASN'T ACTUALLY RUNNING AWAY?
BUT REALLY, IT'S NOT LIKE I HAD ANYONE I COULD TALK TO...
PLEASE TAKE ME TO THE NICE WOMAN!
WHO?
YOU KNOW, SHE'S THE CHEERFUL, BLONDE WOMAN!
I DECIDED THAT I HAD TO GO FIND HER, BY MYSELF.


IRENE-SAMA IS THE ONE WHO TOLD ME...
...ABOUT THE LIE SHE TOLD BACK IN JUNIOR HIGH.
THE LIE?
YEAH... SHE'S THE ONE WHO TOLD EVERYONE THAT A TEACHER IN THE HIGH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT WAS HER BOYFRIEND.
HUH? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
SHE PROBABLY JUST SAID IT TO IMPRESS HER FRIENDS...
BUT... WELL, IT GOT AROUND. AND THEN THE PTA GOT INVOLVED AND IT WAS ALL A BIG MESS.
SO DADDY QUIT.
BECAUSE APPARENTLY THE BLAME FOR WHAT SHE DID WAS ON HIM, THE TEACHER.

What?
SO IF THE GIRL WAS IN JUNIOR HIGH, THEN THAT MEANS SHE WASN'T EVEN HIS STUDENT, RIGHT?
AND YET HE STILL QUIT?
YES, HE STILL QUIT.
IT'S SO STUPID, REALLY.
...I WAS IN SHOCK.
AND THEN, THE DISTRUST I HAD FOR DADDY CHANGED INTO PURE HATRED TOWARDS HER.
I'LL LET YOUR FAMILY KNOW YOU'RE HERE, SO FEEL FREE TO STAY AS LONG AS YOU LIKE.
MARIYA...
I'D LIKE YOU TO LOOK AFTER LITTLE MIKI HERE.
AFTER ALL, YOU ARE OLDER THAN HER.


B-BUT, MOM IS YOUR MOM TOO, ISN'T SHE?
I MEAN, LOOK AT THIS ALBUM! LOOK HOW MUCH SHE CARED ABOUT YOU...
THAT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS.
MIKI...

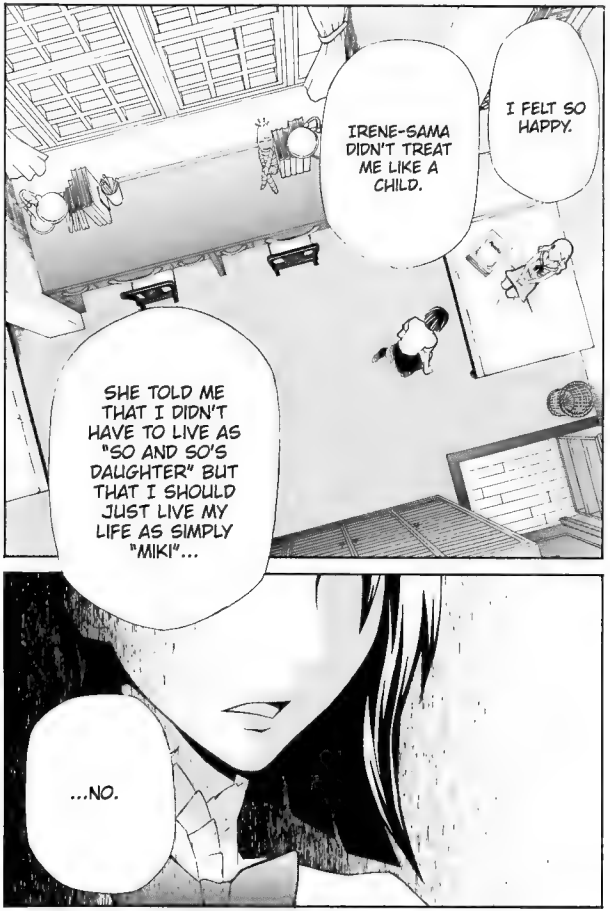

I MEAN... I TRIED, I REALLY DID. I TOLD MYSELF I HAD TO FORGIVE HER.
I TOLD MYSELF THAT SHE WAS MY MOM—THAT I HAD TO LEARN TO LOVE HER.
I HAD FINALLY GOTTEN RID OF THE WORRY THAT'D BEEN ON MY MIND FOR YEARS, AND THEN ANOTHER ONE JUST TOOK ITS PLACE.
OH, MIKI...
IS THAT WHAT'S TROUBLING YOU?

IT'S FINE IF YOU DON'T LOVE HER.
AFTER ALL, LOVING SOMEONE IS NEVER MANDATORY.
B-BUT... SHE'S MY MOMMY.
AND I GUESS SHE DID PAMPER ME WHEN SHE WAS ALIVE...
OF COURSE SHE DID. A PARENT MUST ALWAYS LOOK AFTER THEIR CHILDREN.

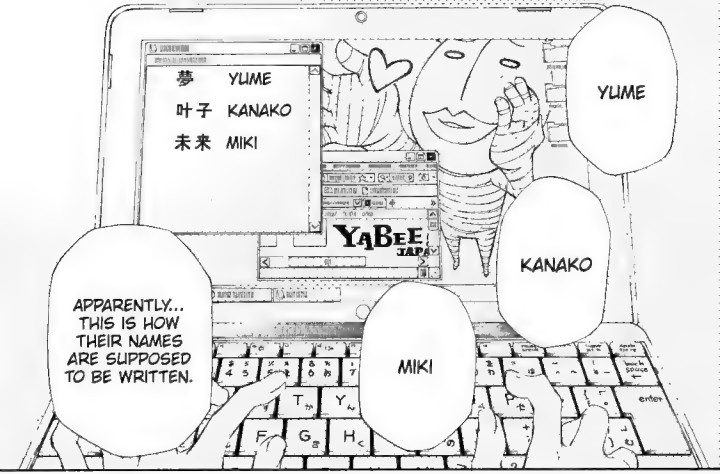
BUT, JUST BECAUSE SOMEONE LOVES YOU, IT DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO LOVE THEM BACK.
WOULD YOU BE ABLE TO LOVE THAT BOY IN YOUR CLASS WHO WAS ALWAYS GOING AROUND FLIPPING UP GIRLS' SKIRTS IF HE CONFESSED HIS LOVE TO YOU?
N-NO WAY!
YOU SEE?
LOVING SOMEONE SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY LOVE YOU WOULD BE A MACHINE-LIKE RESPONSE. AND THAT WOULD BE RUDE TO THEM.
IT WOULDN'T BE SOMETHING FROM YOUR OWN HEART...
...BUT RATHER A REFLECTION OF WHAT IS IN THEIRS.

NOW YOU'RE JUST BEING MEAN.
I'M A LITTLE CONFUSED BY EVERYTHING YOU JUST SAID, BUT...
YOU JUST MADE THAT ALL UP, DIDN'T YOU?
WHOOPS, GUESS YOU CAUGHT ME.
YOU REALLY ARE A SMART GIRL.
.....
WELL, THEN LET ME BE FRANK WITH YOU.
I'M SORRY.
IF YOU DON'T FORGIVE HER, PEOPLE WILL ACCUSE YOU OF BEING COLD-HEARTED.
AND IF YOU DO FORGIVE HER...
WELL, IT'S NOT SUCH AN EASY THING TO DO NOW, IS IT?
IF YOU PRETEND TO FORGIVE HER, IT WILL ONLY END UP WOUNDING YOUR OWN PRIDE.

NO MATTER WHICH PATH YOU CHOOSE, YOU WILL SUFFER.
BUT, THAT CAN'T BE HELPED. NO ONE IS GOING TO COME SAVE YOU FROM YOURSELF.
YOU'VE GOT TO FIGHT YOUR OWN BATTLES.
HOWEVER, WHICH BATTLE YOU CHOOSE TO FIGHT IS UP TO YOU.


I FELT SO HAPPY.
IRENE-SAMA DIDN'T TREAT ME LIKE A CHILD.
SHE TOLD ME THAT I DIDN'T HAVE TO LIVE AS "SO AND SO'S DAUGHTER" BUT THAT I SHOULD JUST LIVE MY LIFE AS SIMPLY "MIKI"...
...NO.

I DON'T THINK OF HER AS "MY MOTHER."
NOT YET.
NOT YET?!
KANAKO-CHAN...
I DON'T LIKE THAT AT ALL! WHEN YOU SAY IT LIKE THAT, IT MAKES YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'RE ALL ALONE!
YOU AREN'T ALONE, MIKI. YOU ARE MY LITTLE SISTER!
AND YOU WILL ALWAYS BE THE DAUGHTER OF OUR MOTHER AND FATHER!
PAH
THAT MEANS THAT YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MAY THINK IN THE FUTURE, BECAUSE YOU SAID "NOT YET"!
HUH?
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT. I JUST SAID IT WRONG IS ALL, I-
THAT'S FINE. AS YOUR SISTER, I'LL WAIT AS LONG AS IT TAKES!! WE'VE STILL GOT THE REST OF OUR LIVES.
AND, AS OUR NAME SAYS, "OUR DREAMS WILL COME TRUE...
...AND WE'LL ALL HAVE BRIGHT FUTURES!"

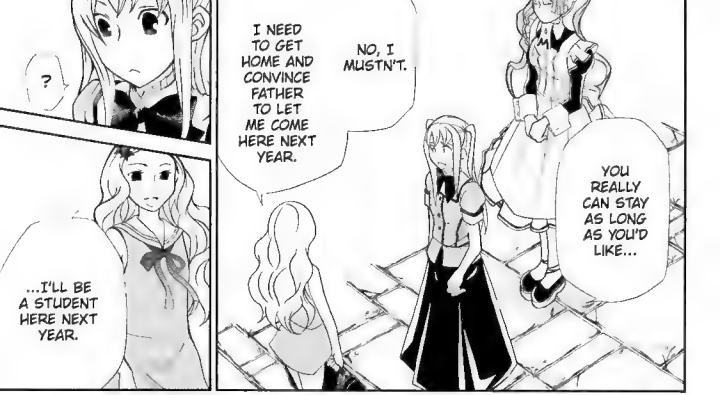

夢 YUME
叶子 KANAKO
未来 MIKI
YABEE
JAPAN
APPARENTLY... THIS IS HOW THEIR NAMES ARE SUPPOSED TO BE WRITTEN.
MIKI
KANAKO
YUME

SO, THEN WHY DON'T YOU KINDLY TELL MIKI THE TRUTH BEHIND HER NAME?
WELL, FOR ONE, SHE PROBABLY WRITES IT DIFFERENTLY SO SHE DOESN'T FEEL TIED-DOWN BY THE NAME GIVEN TO HER.
AND IF I WERE TO POINT THAT OUT TO HER, I'D JUST BE A KILLJOY.

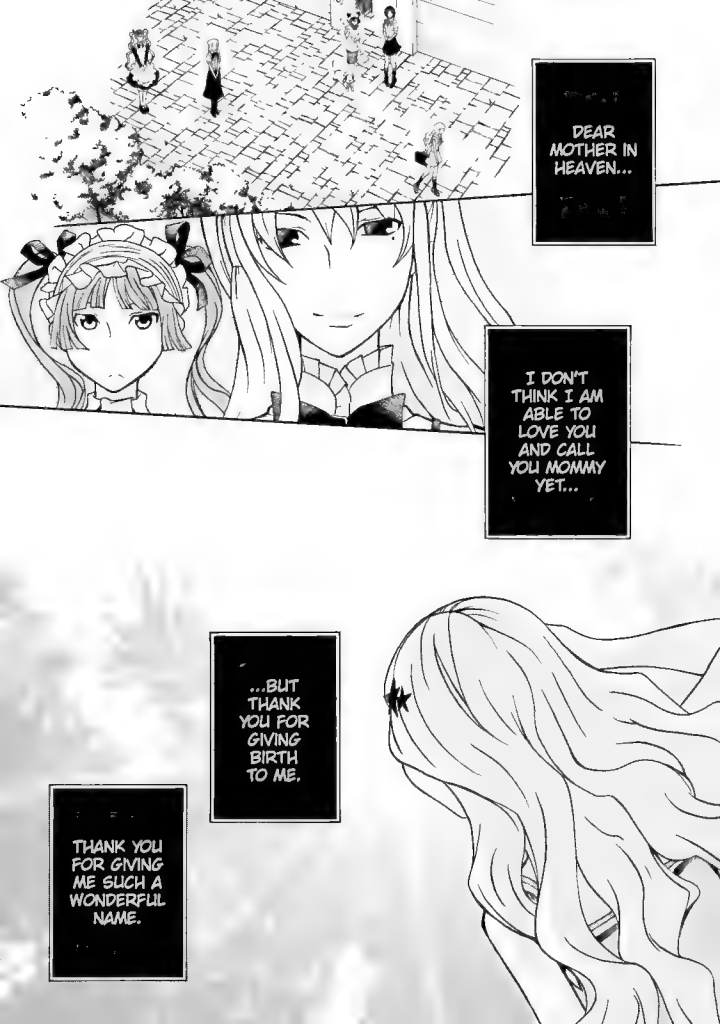
OH, SO REALLY IT'S...
...YUME, KANAKO, MIKI?
IT SEEMS THEIR MOTHER WROTE THEIR NAMES TO MEAN...
..."A FUTURE WHERE DREAMS COME TRUE."

THEY DO SAY THAT A CHILD'S NAME IS PACKED WITH THEIR PARENTS' HOPES AND DREAMS.

CHIRP CHIRP
チチチ…
CHIRP
チュン
CHIRP CHIRP
チチチ…
WHERE DOES YOUR NAME COME FROM, MATSURIKA?
SIGH
WELL, IT MEANS JASMINE. AND JASMINE BLOOMS IN SEPTEMBER, WHICH IS WHEN I WAS BORN.
LET ME GUESS, YOUR BROTHER RINDOU IS NAMED AFTER THE AUTUMN BELLFLOWER? THAT'S SO BORING...
GIRLS' DORM NUMBER TWO
I'M REALLY SORRY ABOUT BARGING IN ON YOU LIKE THAT.
OH, DON'T MENTION IT.
THOSE WASABI-FLAVORED MACARON YOU BROUGHT ME WERE SIMPLY WOOOONDERFUL.
Oh?
ARE YOU LEAVING ALREAAAADY?


?
...I'LL BE A STUDENT HERE NEXT YEAR.
I NEED TO GET HOME AND CONVINCE FATHER TO LET ME COME HERE NEXT YEAR.
NO, I MUSTN'T.
YOU REALLY CAN STAY AS LONG AS YOU'D LIKE...

SO I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN...
...IN THE "FUTURE WHERE DREAMS COME TRUE."


DEAR MOTHER IN HEAVEN...
I DON'T THINK I AM ABLE TO LOVE YOU AND CALL YOU MOMMY YET...
...BUT THANK YOU FOR GIVING BIRTH TO ME.
THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME SUCH A WONDERFUL NAME.

HERE, AT THE SCHOOL WHERE YOU AND DADDY MET...
...I, TOO, HAVE FOUND MY ONE AND ONLY LOVE.
SO, NOW THAT WE'VE GOT THAT SETTLED.
MIYAMAE KANAKO...
I AM NOW GOING TO GIVE YOU YOUR PUNISHMENT.
WHAT? WHAT PUNISHMENT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT...?
FOR TELLING A SECRET ABOUT ME THAT SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN TOLD...
...I HEREBY DIVEST YOU OF YOUR RIGHT TO SAY ANYTHING IN THE NEXT CHAPTER.
HEY, WAIT A MINUTE ....!
IN OTHER WORDS, KANAKO-SAMA WILL BE ONLY A BACKGROUND CHARACTER WITH NO LINES.
...TO MY DEAR MOTHER IN HEAVEN (SHORTENED).
WHAT?!
IN THE NEXT CHAPTER, A COMPLETELY UNEXPECTED AND SHOCKING DEVELOPMENT AWAITS YOUR KANAKO.

MARIA HOLIC

MARIA HOLIC

TO MY DEAR MOTHER... AND FATHER, AND SOMETIMES POCHI, TAMA, YOSHI, GORIMURA, ANTOINETTE... (ETC)
I HAVE FINALLY MADE MY WAY TO WHAT CAN BE CALLED THE DEVIL CITY, TOKYO.
I HAVE COME TO THIS SCHOOL...
...TO GIVE THE WOMAN I LOVE AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE.
天の妃女学院附属
中学高等学校
AME NO KISAKI GIRLS' SCHOOL MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

Prayer38
A Japanese Summer Full of Stag Beetles and Punishment

DIIIING
DOOOONG
AND THAT MARKS THE END OF THE SUMMER CLASSES FOR TODAY.
EVERYONE STAND, BOW AND...
AN ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT THE SUMMER CLASSES
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
HEY, ISHIMA! REMEMBER HOW I SAID WE WERE GOING TO THE BOOKSTORE TODAY?
DID YOU GET PERMISSION TO GO OFF SCHOOL GROUNDS?

OF COURSE I DID, CHIFUMI.
SHOULD WE STOP BY THE DORMS FIRST?
NO WAY! THAT DOESN'T SOUND FUN. SINCE WE CAN, LET'S HAVE LUNCH OFF-CAMPUS!
I'M REALLY IN THE MOOD TO FILL UP ON HAMBURGERS OR SOME SORT OF FAST FOOD.

THAT'S NOT HEALTHY AT ALL.
WE HAVE THE INTER-HIGH SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIPS COMING UP. DON'T YOU THINK YOU SHOULD BE TAKING BETTER CARE OF YOUR BODY?
YOU'RE SO STUBBORN, ISHIMA. ONE MEAL ISN'T GONNA CHANGE ANYTHING.
AND OH MAN, NOW THAT I SAID IT OUT LOUD, I REALLY WANT A HAMBURGER!
WELL, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I COULD GO FOR SOME DUCK SOUP.

What?
MAN, THAT'S A HARD ONE TO COMPROMISE ON. HOW ABOUT CHASHU RAMEN?
ARE YOU EVEN TRYING TO WORK WITH ME?!
I THINK YOU SHOULD HAVE THE SOBA WITH WILD PLANTS.
I THINK SOBA IS BETTER, ESPECIALLY IN THE SUMMER.
YOU AREN'T EVEN TRYING TO HAVE A REAL CONVERSATION!

NO, YOU'RE WORSE. YOU LOOK LIKE A PARASITE PRETENDING TO BE A STAG BEETLE!
YOU LOOK LIKE A LAMPRIMA ADOLPHINAE STAG BEETLE!
WILL YOU LET GO OF THIS WILD PLANTS FIXATION ALREADY?!
OOH, HOW ABOUT SOBA WITH WILD PLANTS AND GRATED YAM?
OR EVEN BETTER, LET'S GET AWAY FROM SOBA ALTOGETHER!
A STAG BEETLE ...?
DON'T TREAT ME LIKE A KID! I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW I'M 10 YEARS OLD AND I WON'T LET YOU PUSH ME AROUND THAT EASILY!
AT FIVE YEARS OLD, THE GIANT STAG BEETLE IS ALREADY A SEASONED BREEDER!

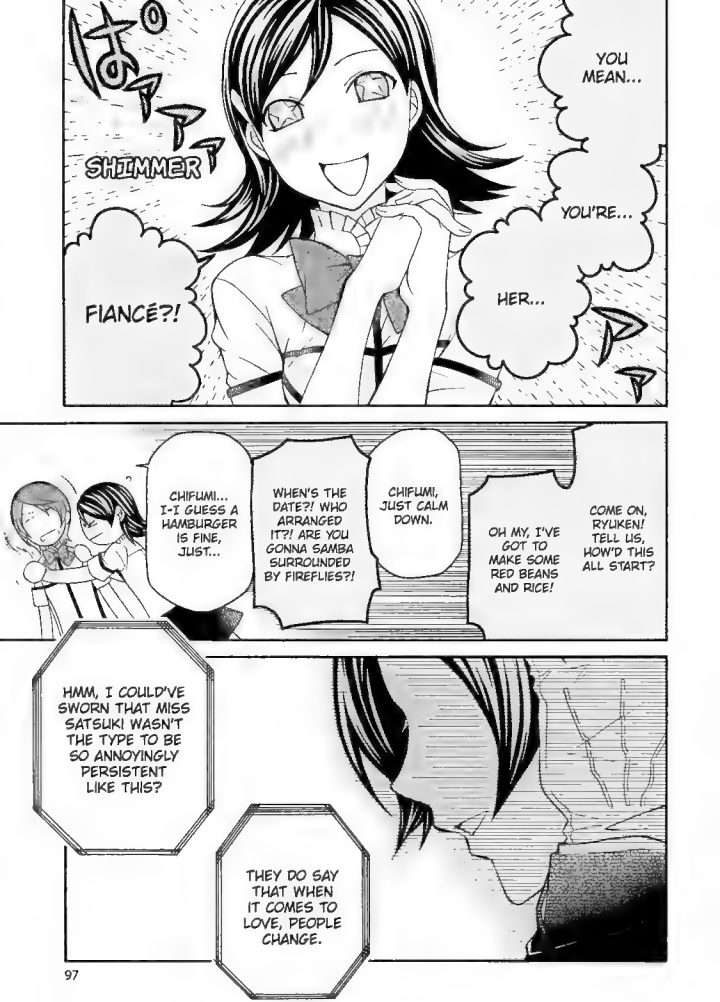
ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY THAT BECAUSE THIS IS AN ALL GIRLS' SCHOOL, BOYS AREN'T ALLOWED?
YOU'RE STUPID! I'M JUST A KID, SO STOP PUSHING YOUR ADULT RULES ON ME!
IF THE OLD LADY WORKING THE DESK AT THE BATH HOUSE IS NICE, I'M STILL ALLOWED IN THE LADIES' BATH!
BUT YOU... YOU WERE JUST TELLING ME NOT TO TREAT YOU LIKE A KID...
WHEN DID I SAY THAT?!
THAT'S YOUR PROBLEM! YOU'RE A BRAINLESS OLD MAN WHO ONLY THINKS ABOUT THE PAST!
WHAT ABOUT YOU, OLD MAN? YOU'RE A BOY, TOO. WHICH MEANS YOU ARE THE PRIME EXAMPLE OF A BEAST.
WHOA
IS IT REALLY OKAY TO LET A DANGEROUS ANIMAL ROAM FREE OFF-LEASH LIKE THIS?!
I'M A MAN OF THE CLOTH. I MAY BE A MAN, BUT AMONG MEN I AM THE LEAST DANGEROUS MAN YOU COULD EVER MEET!
TOUTA-KUN?
MR. POLICEMAN! WE'VE GOT A PEDOPHILE HERE!
YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG!! IT'S JUST THAT IF YOU LOVE SOMEONE, AGE DOESN'T MA-

WHY ARE YOU HERE?
HUH? DO YOU KNOW HIM, ISHIMA?
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
MISS BEAUTIFUL...
MISS BEAUTIFUL...
SKIP THAT ONE...
AND MISS BEAUTIFUL...

かなこは前話の失言の罰として発言権を奪われています。
"Kanako has had her right to speak taken from her as punishment" for her previous slip of the tongue.
"BECAUSE, MARIYA IS ACTUALLY A BOY!"
Man~
ALL THE GIRLS HERE IN TOKYO ARE SO REFINED!!
Well, all except one!

THANK YOU, MISS BEAUTIFUL #2.
OH, DON'T MENTION IT.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WAS ABLE TO TALK THEM INTO LETTING ME IN HERE AS A GUEST, AREN'T YOU?
IF YOU'RE A GUEST OF ISHIMA-SENPAI, THEN YOU'RE ALSO A SPECIAL GUEST OF MINE.

SO TELL US, WHAT'S YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO HER?
ARE YOU HER BROTHER? HER COUSIN?
OH RIGHT, I HAVEN'T INTRODUCED MYSELF.
MY NAME IS HANABUSA TOUTA. OCCUPATION, STUDENT.
AND I AM RYUKEN'S FUTURE HUSBAND.


SHIMMER
FIANCÉ?!
YOU MEAN...
YOU'RE...
HER...
CHIFUMI... I-I GUESS A HAMBURGER IS FINE, JUST...
WHEN'S THE DATE?! WHO ARRANGED IT?! ARE YOU GONNA SAMBA SURROUNDED BY FIREFLIES?!
CHIFUMI, JUST CALM DOWN.
OH MY, I'VE GOT TO MAKE SOME RED BEANS AND RICE!
COME ON, RYUKEN! TELL US, HOW'D THIS ALL START?
HMM, I COULD'VE SWORN THAT MISS SATSUKI WASN'T THE TYPE TO BE SO ANNOYINGLY PERSISTENT LIKE THIS?
THEY DO SAY THAT WHEN IT COMES TO LOVE, PEOPLE CHANGE.

HELLO.
AS SHE IS UNABLE TO DO SO ON HER OWN, WE WILL BE EXPLAINING MISS KANAKO'S THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS IN THIS CHAPTER.
I AM SHINOUJI RINDOU.
AND I AM, HEH... I'M HIS ASSISTANT, GOD.
HYAN!
AND NOW, LET US CONTINUE TO ENJOY THE MATCH IN FRONT OF US.
SO.
HOW DID YOU, ISHIMA'S FIANCÉ, GET TO OUR SCHOOL?
I TOOK THE N700 BULLET TRAIN.
THAT'S NOT EXACTLY WHAT I MEANT.
THERE AREN'T ANY TICKET RESALE SHOPS AROUND SHIN-OSAKA STATION...
...SO I HAD TO GO TO NISHINAKAJIMA MINAMIGATA STATION AND BUY ONE AT A SHOP OUTSIDE THE EAST EXIT.
.....
SO, RYUKEN...

COMMENTATOR RINDOU-SAN, DID YOU SEE MIYAMAE'S FACE JUST NOOOOOW?
THAT WAS MOST DEFINITELY A MENACE-FILLED GLARE.
INDEED.
THAT WAS THE LOOK I IMAGINE PEASANTS HAVING JUST BEFORE THEY STAGE A REVOLT.
A REVOLT... SUCH A TERRIBLE THING, REEEEALLY...
HUNGRY PEASANTS STAND NO CHANCE AGAINST AN ARMY WITH FULL BELLIES.
AHH...?
JUST THE FACT THAT THEY HAVE NO WEAPONS AND USE WHATEVER THEY CAN FIND IS A FOOLISHLY BOLD MOVE.
YOU'RE RIGHT. AND SPEAKING OF THAT, THE VIETCONG USED STRATEGIES SUCH AS NIGHT ATTACKS AND BAMBOO TRAPS.
THEY PUT UP A VERY SKILLED FIGHT IN THAT REGARD.

あはははは はは
AH HA HA HA
Heh heh...
IT DOES SEEM THAT YOU HAVE SEEN IT ALL, HOUSE MOTHER.
WELL, I AM GOD, AND GOD DOOOOES SEE ALL...
ガタ..
CLATTER
...WELL, SINCE WE'VE GOT SOME FREE TIME, WHY DON'T YOU TWO TAKE A WALK AROUND THE SCHOOL GROUNDS?
wait!
I'VE STILL GOT QUESTIONS I WANT TO ASK THEM!
ARGH!
THAT WON'T DO AT ALL. WE'VE GOT TO HEAD OVER TO ARCHERY CLUB SOON, PRESIDENT SATSUKI.
ISHIMA, WE'LL GO TO THE BOOKSTORE TOMORROW. BE SURE TO GET PERMISSION TO LEAVE SCHOOL GROUNDS FOR US AGAIN.
YOU'RE RIGHT. NOW IS A VERY IMPORTANT TIME, WHAT WITH INTER-HIGH MATCHES COMING UP.
SORRY FOR THE TROUBLE.

EVEN A CHILD THROWING A TANTRUM IN A TOY STORE HAS A SLIGHTLY CUTER LOOK.
SHE DOES NOT LOOK HAPPY WITH THAT...
SHIMMER
WELL THEN, I'LL LEAVE YOU TWO YOUNG THINGS ALONE. ☆
"FIANCE? AS IF YOU, A LITTLE DWARF, HAS THE RIGHT TO STAND NEXT TO RYUKEN LIKE THAT! THE ONLY ONE ALLOWED TO DO THAT IS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN WHO I APPROVE OF!"
SHE WOULD LOVE TO HURL THIS, AND MORE ABUSE AT HIM. ALAS, SHE HAD HER RIGHT TO SPEAK TAKEN FROM HER TEMPORARILY.
OH MY! THAT WAS AN UNEXPECTED BUT NICE PLAY ON SATSUKI'S PART.
AND THAT IS WHY SHE IS THE CLUB PRESIDENT! JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT SHE HAD BECOME THE ANNOYING TYPE OF CHARACTER, SHE TIES THINGS UP JUST WHEN IT'S NEEDED.
AND NOW OUR STAR PLAYER KANAKO IS BEING FORCEFULLY TAKEN OFF THE FIELD!!

HOWEVER, THINKING ABOUT MISS KANAKO AND HER INDOMITABLE SPIRIT...
...WE CAN LOOK FORWARD TO WHATEVER COUNTER-ATTACK SHE HAS PLANNED FOR LATER.
YES, WE CAN...
HYAN!!
HA HA HA
はは
They're a fun bunch.
CLENCH

SO, IS THERE ANYWHERE YOU'D LIKE TO GO TOUTA-KUN?
...WELL, WE CAN'T EXACTLY GO FAR.
BUT WE CAN WALK AROUND THE GROUNDS, CHECK OUT THE CLUBS, WHATEVER YOU WANT...
...I DON'T CARE.
AS LONG AS I'M WITH THE WOMAN I LOVE, I'M HAPPY.
AND IF WE HAD A STAG BEETLE, THAT'D BE PARADISE.

I'D HEARD TOKYO WAS NOTHING BUT CONCRETE JUNGLE...
A STAG BEETLE?
...BUT AFTER COMING HERE, I'D SAY THERE MIGHT BE EVEN MORE GREEN HERE THAN OSAKA.
N-NEVER MIND THAT!

ギラフノコギリクワガタ
PROSOPOCOILUS GIRAFFE
MOSTLY INHABITS TROPICAL RAINFORESTS. THE LONGEST VARIETY OF STAG BEETLE.
N-N-NOTHING! NOTHING AT ALL! YOU ARE LIKE THE SAWTOOTH OAK, I MEAN...
...YOU MAKE ME HAPPIER THAN ANY GIRAFFE STAG BEETLE COULD!
?
TOUTA-KUN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

INTO THE... TUNNELS?
RIGHT. ONE TECHNIQUE OF CATCHING GIANT STAG BEETLES IS TO BLOCK OFF THE TUNNELS THEY USE.
THEN, A LIGHT IS SHONE INTO THE TUNNELS, AND IF ARE ANY SPOTTED, THEY ARE DRAGGED OUT.
OH... LOOKS LIKE HE JUST NONCHALANTLY PUT THE PINNING TOOLS HE HAD PREPARED AWAY.
I THINK WE CAN SAY WITHOUT A DOUBT THAT HE WAS ABOUT TO GO INTO THE TUNNELS FOR INSECTS.

AH! DO YOU SEE HOW HE'S GLANCING AROUND LIKE THAT?
IT SEEMS HE HAS NOT GIVEN UP, AND HAS NOW CHANGED HIS TECHNIQUE TO LOOKING AROUND FOR ANY ON THE TREES.

COMMENTATOR RINDOU, DID TOUTA-KUN COME HERE TO SEE ISHIMA-SAN?
OR DID HE COME HERE TO CAPTURE STAAAAAG BEETLES?
Hmm...
I THINK WE CAN SURMISE THAT HE CAME TO SEE ISHIMA-SAN, BUT NOW THAT THINGS HAVE SETTLED DOWN, HE IS UNABLE TO FIGHT THE DESIRE TO SEARCH FOR GRUBS.
I GUESS IT'S THE SAME AS COMPANY PRESIDENTS AND POLITICIANS BEING UNABLE TO REFUSE THE TEMPTATION OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.
THAT'S RIGHT... IT'S SOMETHING THAT EVEN THE MOST PRUDENT OF ADULTS MAY FALL FOR.
SO TO EXPECT THAT LEVEL OF SELF-CONTROL FROM A BOY OF SUCH A TENDER YOUNG AGE WOULD SIMPLY BE CRUEL...
OH? DID YOU STOP BY MY HOUSE BEFORE COMING HERE?
YEAH.
I WENT TO SEE YOU AND THEY TOLD ME YOU WERE STAYING AT SCHOOL TO TAKE SUMMER COURSES.
YOUR MOM AND POP ARE APPARENTLY FURIOUS THAT YOU TOLD THEM YOU CAN'T LEAVE THE DORMS 'CUZ YOU'RE TOO BUSY STUDYING FOR EXAMS.

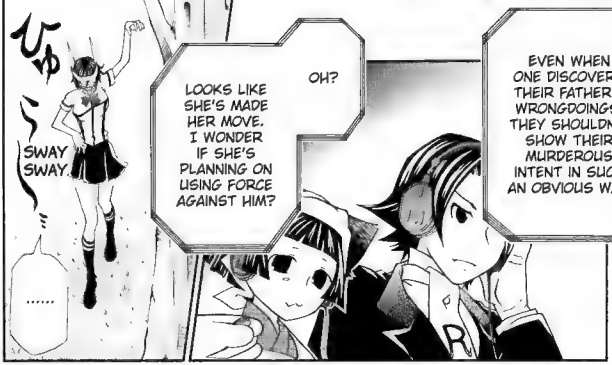
HMPH
IT'S JUST, I'VE GOT A DREAM I'M WORKING TOWARDS.
...BUT, I'M ON YOUR SIDE.

A DREAM?!
ISN'T A WOMAN'S DREAM TO STAY AT HOME AND START A FAMILY?!
AND IF THAT FAMILY HAPPENS TO INCLUDE A STAG BEETLE, THAT'S LIKE PARADISE!
I DON'T KNOW IF THE STAG BEETLE IS REALLY NECESSARY.
I'LL WORK MY HARDEST TO EARN MONEY... AND WHILE THAT MAY MEAN I DON'T GET TO SPEND MUCH TIME HOME WITH YOU...
...WE'LL USE MY RARE DAY OFF TO HEAD UP TO THE MOUNTAINS TOGETHER AND SEARCH FOR GIANT STAG BEETLES THAT ARE LONGER THAN 8 CM.
THAT'S THE QUIET, BUT HAPPY FAMILY THAT I WANT.

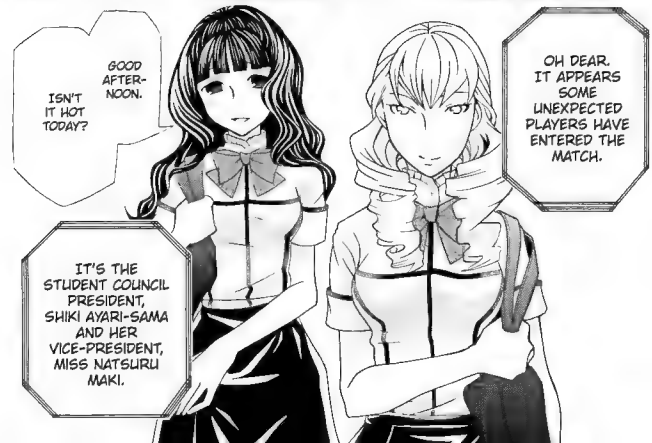
SNIFF
WHAT...?
YEAH.
...THOUGH IN REGARDS TO YOU BEING MY FIANCÉ, YOU DO REALIZE THAT'S JUST A JOKE THE OLD GUYS STARTED TELLING WHILE DRINKING, RIGHT?
I THINK YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE TAKING THEM SERIOUSLY.
Am I right?
I REALLY AM SUPER IN LOVE WITH YOU, RYUKEN.
I GUESS YOU... YOU DON'T FEEL THE SAME...
THAT'S... WELL, AND THAT'S WHY... UM...
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO? I DON'T WANT YOU TO CRY...
I...

TOUTA-KUN...

JUST LOOK AT THAT EXPRESSION ON HER FACE.
OH MY...
SWAY
SWAY


Yes...
EVEN WHEN ONE DISCOVERS THEIR FATHER'S WRONGDOINGS, THEY SHOULDN'T SHOW THEIR MURDEROUS INTENT IN SUCH AN OBVIOUS WAY.
OH?
LOOKS LIKE SHE'S MADE HER MOVE. I WONDER IF SHE'S PLANNING ON USING FORCE AGAINST HIM?
SWAY SWAY
.....

OH HELLO, MIYAMAE-SAN.


OH DEAR. IT APPEARS SOME UNEXPECTED PLAYERS HAVE ENTERED THE MATCH.
GOOD AFTER-NOON.
ISN'T IT HOT TODAY?
IT'S THE STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT, SHIKI AYARI-SAMA AND HER VICE-PRESIDENT, MISS NATSURU MAKI.

THE STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT IS RELATED TO SHIDOU-SAN, IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY.
Huh?
WHY ARE YOU WEARING THAT MASK? DID YOU CATCH A SUMMER COLD OR SOMETHING?
?!!!
OH DEAR! THIS IS A COMPLETELY UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT!!
BUT IT APPEARS THAT WE HAVE THE FIRST SENSIBLE PERSON TO APPEAR AND ASK ABOUT THE MAAAASK!
CLATTER
WELL... THIS CERTAINLY RAISES OUR EXPECTATIONS ABOUT WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT...

HM? THIS LITTLE CREATURE HERE APPEARS TO BE INTERESTED IN SOMETHING.
OH.
DID YOU NOTICE MY SKIRT?
IT USED TO BE KNEE LENGTH. ...YOU REALLY DO NOTICE EVERYTHING, MIYAMAE-SAN.
GULP
IT APPEARS THAT THE VICE-PRESIDENT HAS LIVED UP TO HER NAMESAKE AND FIGURED OUT WHAT MISS KANAKO WANTED TO SAY JUST FROM WHERE SHE WAS LOOKING.
IT'S SHORT IN THE FRONT BECAUSE IT'S A HAND-ME-DOWN FROM A RELATIVE. I GOT MINE CAUGHT ON SOMETHING AND IT RIPPED.
All three of them did...
!!!
HNGH

MIYAMAE-SAN!
DASH
WHAT'S WRONG?
ARE YOU FEELING SI—
SLAP
IT LOOKED LIKE SHE WAS ABOUT TO VOMIT WITH THE WAY SHE WAS COVERING HER MOUTH.
YEAH... IT MAKES ME WORRY...
HUFF
HUFF HUFF
HEE...

HER MASK SEEMS TO HAVE DYED ITSELF THE RED OF FRESH BLOOD.

IT APPEARS THAT WHAT SHE IMAGINED JUST A MINUTE AGO CAUSED HER TO HAVE AN EXPLOSIVE NOSEBLEED. WE HAVEN'T SEEN THAT IN A WHILE.

IF IT WERE ANY NORMAL DAY, SHE WOULD HAVE LIKELY CHOSEN THE "PLEASURE COURSE" OF HAVING AYARI-SAMA TAKE CARE OF HER IN THE NURSE'S OFFICE.

HOWEVER, SHE REALIZES THAT HER PRIORITY NOW IS KEEPING TRACK OF ISHIMA-SAMA AND HER SO-CALLED FIANCÉ...

ONE COULD SAY THAT THIS DEDICATION TO HER MISSION WOULD MAKE HER A GREAT SPY.

SWAY ゆら…

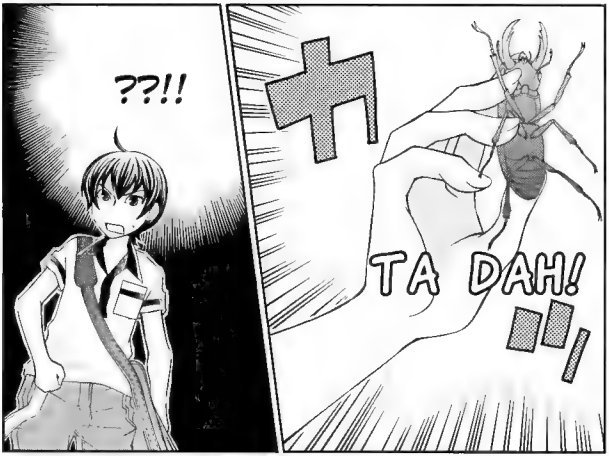
HRM
SHE HAS SET OFF ONCE AGAIN.
THE ONLY FEELING SHE HAS RIGHT NOW IS THE URGE TO DESTROY.
SHE IS DETERMINED TO THOROUGHLY CRUSH AND DESTROY THE LOVE FORMING IN SUCH AN INNOCENT GRADE-SCHOOLER'S HEART.
RUN!
RUN!!
RUN!!!

EVEN IF YOU LOSE YOUR VOICE...
THUD
...AND YOU FEEL LIKE...
...YOUR KNEES ARE ABOUT TO GIVE OUT...

YOU'VE GOT NO TIME TO THINK ABOUT HOW YOUR HEART IS ABOUT TO EXPLODE.
JUST ...
...RUN. RUN WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT!

RUN, EVEN IF WHAT AWAITS YOU...
BAM
...IS FAR FROM PARADISE.
LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER PESKY CREATURE HAS ENTERED THE MATCH.
INDEED. AND SHE'S GOT THE SMUG LOOK OF VICTORY ON HER FACE, THOUGH I CAN'T FAAAATHOM WHY.

BST
KANAKO-KUN? IS SOMETHING WRONG?
...OH, IF IT ISN'T YOU, THE ONE I SKIPPED OVER BEFORE.


??!!
TA DAH!

FROM WHAT WE HAVE SEEN SO FAR, WE CAN ASSUME THAT SHE TOOK A SHORT-CUT AND CAPTURED A STAG BEETLE WHILE WAITING FOR THEM.
IN MISS KANAKO'S MIND, SHE THINKS THAT SHE HAS SHOWN HIM THAT SHE IS FAR SUPERIOR TO HIM...
HOWEVER, HER PLAN WAS SIMPLE AND FOOLISH AT BEST.
GRIN

GET READY TO FIGHT!
YOU'VE SURE GOT SOME NERVE! RYUKEN... ALLOW ME TO SHOW YOU JUST HOW SUITABLE I AM FOR YOU!
TOUTA-KUN?!
GLARE
ゴゴゴ
THE FIGHT IS OVER...
...AND THE SUN IS SETTING...

MIYAMAE-SAN HAS BEEN BEATEN ON HER HOME TURF.
I AM SURE MOST OF US SAW THAT COMING FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.
THE ONLY PROBLEM IS THAT EVEN WE COMMENTATORS HERE ARE UNSURE OF WHAT EXACTLY TRANSPIRED IN THE BATTLE THEY FOUGHT.
I GUESS NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO MENTION THAT THE YOUNG TOUTA IS KNOWN AS THE "PALAWAN OF OSAKA" AROUND HIS NEIGHBORHOOD...
PALAWAN DORCUS TITANUS
FOUND ON THE PALAWAN ISLANDS, IT IS CONSIDERED THE STRONGEST DORCUS STAG BEETLE IN THE WORLD

WHAT ARE YOU EVEN DOING? JUST LOOK UP AT ME.
DID YOU REALLY THINK I'D LET RYUKEN SEE YOU BEAT ME?
SNIFF
HERE... I'LL GIVE YOU THIS.
SORRY ABOUT THAT MISS NOT-QUITE-BEAUTIFUL JAB.
THEY DO SAY THAT CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN... AND, WELL THE 98 MM GIANT STAG BEETLE FITS YOU WELL...

...THIS IS A—!!
IT'S A CHARM FROM GOD OF LEARNING OF THE DAZAIFU TENMANGU SHRINE.
HUH? LIKE THIS?
...RYUKEN, HOLD OUT YOUR HANDS.
WELL... I GUESS IT'S TIME I MADE MY MOVE.
学業御守
PROTECTION OF LEARNING
I...WELL, I ACTUALLY KNEW ALL ALONG THAT YOU STAYED HERE TO PREPARE FOR EXAMS. I MEAN...I'M YOUR FIANCÉ, SO OF COURSE I DID.
THIS IS THE REAL REASON I CAME HERE.
YA BETTER STUDY REAL HARD.

IT WAS MEANT TO BE A DAY TRIP FROM THE START. AND IF I DON'T LEAVE SOON, I'LL MISS MY TRAIN.
HUH? BUT YOU JUST GOT HERE.
WELL, SINCE THAT'S DONE, I BETTER START HEADIN' BACK TO OSAKA.
I PROMISE THAT THE NEXT TIME WE MEET I'LL BE A MUCH COOLER GUY.
I HOPE YOU'LL GIVE THE ENGAGEMENT IDEA MORE THOUGHT WHEN THAT DAY COMES.
HUH?
WAIT...
...TOUTA-KUN...

Y-YOU'RE?!
OHH, IF IT ISN'T THE OLD MAN FROM BEFORE?

YOU'RE STILL AN OLD MAN, BUT I'M SORRY ABOUT CALLING YOU A PERVERTED BEAST OF ONE.
FROM NOW ON, I'LL CALL YOU OLD MAN KANAE.
ゴッ…
THWAP
HERE... HAVE THIS AS AN APOLOGY.

YA DON'T NEED TO REPAY ME.

TO MY DEAR MOTHER, FATHER, AND SOMETIMES POCHI, TAMA, YOSHIO, GORIMURA, ANTOINETTE (ETC)
?
?
WHAT THEY CALL THE DEVIL CITY ACTUALLY ISN'T SUCH A BAD PLACE AFTER ALL.

I MAY STILL BE YOUNG AND IMMATURE, BUT I THINK I CAN GO HOME KNOWING I DID WHAT I CAME FOR.
...VISITING THE WOMAN I LOVE AT HER SCHOOL...
I FEEL LIKE I MAY HAVE GROWN UP A LITTLE...
Ya know, the character for Kanae kinda looks like a stag beetle.
Maybe he's not so bad...
KANAE

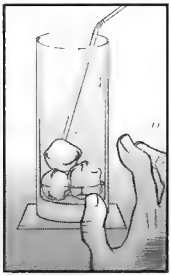
Prayer 39

That Day of Summer Vacation That Was Filled With Acetic Acid

売りだ!
Sell!
売り治びせろ!
Sell all you can!
ホルダーの心を折れ
Get all the fight out of holders.
今ある弾を使い切っても構わん
Don't care if you use all the bullets.

提案?
Suggestion?
聞いてる時間など無いね
No time for that.
良く聞けアレックス
Listen, Alex.
タイミングは今だ今しかないんだ
The time is now. It's NOW.
次はない
There is no 'next time'.
わかったな?
Got it?

EXCUSE ME, MISS, COULD I GET ANOTHER ONE OF THESE?
OF COURSE. YOU HAD AN ICED COFFEE, RIGHT?



I BROUGHT MY OWN MAGICAL STICK IF YOU DON'T HAVE YOURS.
AND I'M ALSO SORRY TO BUG YOU, BUT COULD YOU SAY "BECOME MORE AND MORE DELICIOUS" AND CAST YOUR MAGIC ON IT BEFORE I DRINK IT?

.....

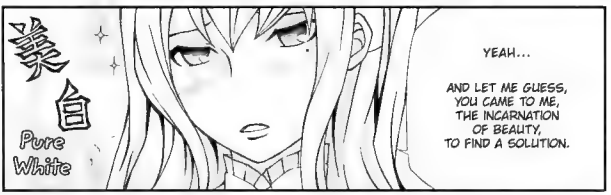
Prayer39
That Day of Summer Vacation That Was Filled With Acetic Acid

...AND THAT'S WHY I REALLY NEED YOUR HELP, MARIYA-SAN.

.....
...HOW DID YOU EVEN END UP THAT DARK?
WELL... I WAS RUNNING AROUND OUTSIDE ALL DAY YESTERDAY LOOKING FOR STAG BEETLES....

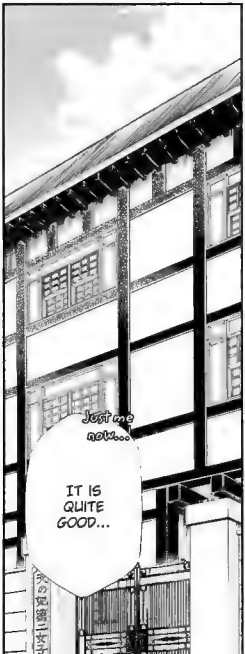
BUT I PUT TONS OF SUNBLOCK ON...
MAYONNAISE

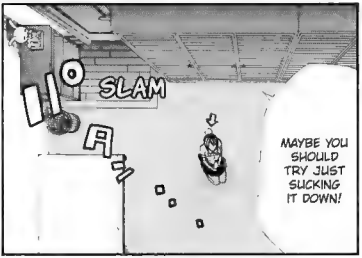
S-SO THE VEGETABLE OIL IN MAYONNAISE MADE ME THIS DARK...
...YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?
.....


Pure White
YEAH...
AND LET ME GUESS, YOU CAME TO ME, THE INCARNATION OF BEAUTY, TO FIND A SOLUTION.

IN OTHER WORDS, I SHOULD USE POISON TO FIGHT POISON?!
YOU'D BE HEALING THE DAMAGE DONE BY THE MAYO WITH MORE MAYO.
ALL RIGHT... WELL, WHY DON'T YOU START BY TRYING THE OLD-WIVES REMEDY OF USING THE MAYONNAISE AS A LOTION?

あっ
THAT SOUNDS JUST LIKE THE RELATIONSHIP YOU TWO HAVE WITH EACH OTHER!
AH
あっ


Just me now...
IT IS QUITE GOOD...


SLAM
MAYBE YOU SHOULD TRY JUST SUCKING IT DOWN!

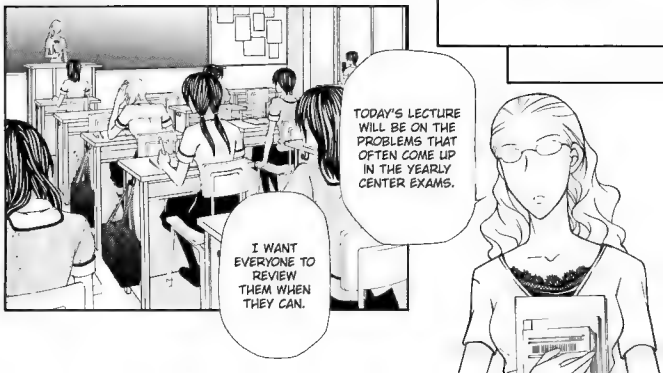
SLURP
ちゅう…
……

Prayer 10

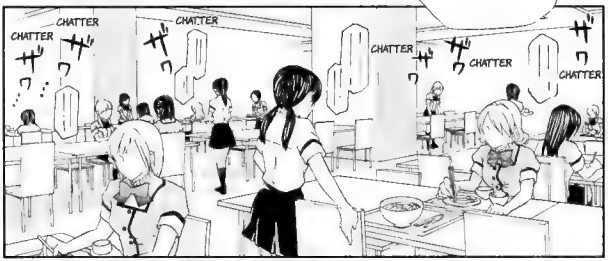
The End of That Day of Summer Vacation That Was Filled With Acetic Acid

SO, IF YOU HAVE A FIRE CAUSED BY THE OIL FROM FRYING TEMPURA AND YOU WANT TO PUT IT OUT, A TUBE OF MAYONNAISE DUMPED IN WILL DO THE TRICK.
OR SO THEY SAY.
ALTHOUGH THERE ARE TIMES WHERE THIS WILL WORK, MOST OF THE TIME THE FIRE WILL JUST GET BIGGER SO I CAN'T SAY I'D RECOMMEND IT.
OKAY...

WHEN THERE IS A FIRE...
...USE A FIRE EXTIN-GUISHER.
YOU DO HAVE ONE IN YOUR HOUSE, DON'T YOU?
INSTEAD, WHEN TROUBLE ARISES, USE THE TOOL THAT WAS CREATED TO SOLVE IT.

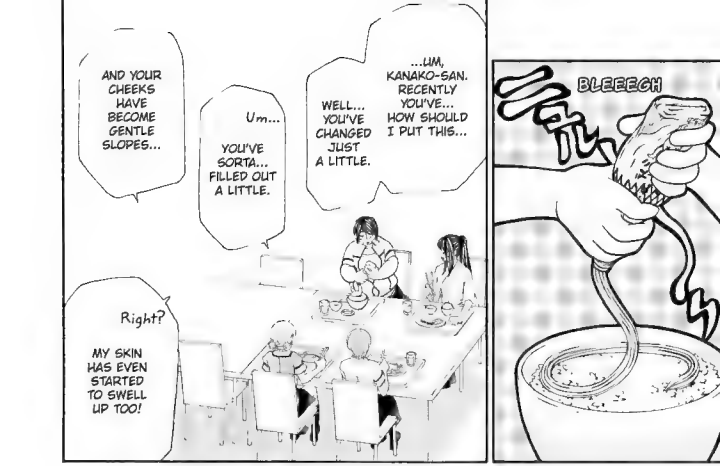

I WANT EVERYONE TO REVIEW THEM WHEN THEY CAN.
TODAY'S LECTURE WILL BE ON THE PROBLEMS THAT OFTEN COME UP IN THE YEARLY CENTER EXAMS.

DONG
DING
DONG
DING
AND WITH THAT, TODAY'S SUMMER CLASSES HAVE COME TO AN END.


CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER

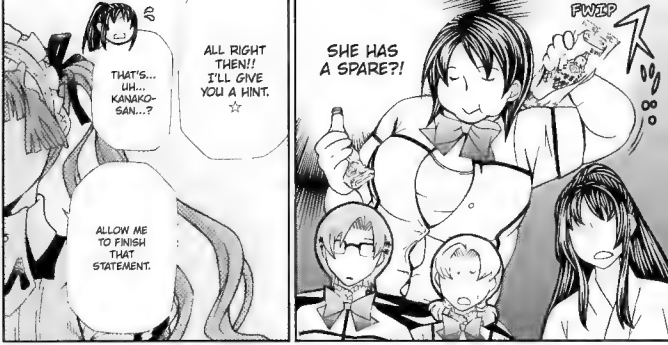
CHATTER
CHATTER

PLUMP
SUPER
??!!

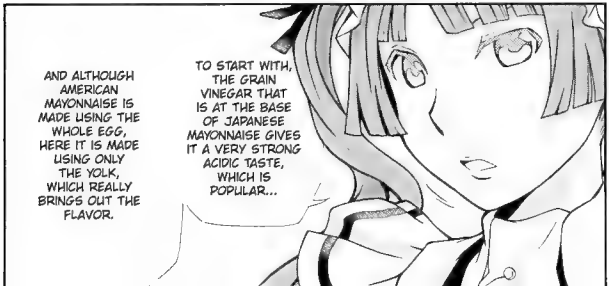

AND YOUR CHEEKS HAVE BECOME GENTLE SLOPES...
Um...
YOU'VE SORTA... FILLED OUT A LITTLE.
WELL... YOU'VE CHANGED JUST A LITTLE.
...UM, KANAKO-SAN. RECENTLY YOU'VE... HOW SHOULD I PUT THIS...
Right?
MY SKIN HAS EVEN STARTED TO SWELL UP TOO!
BLEEECH

What?
ISN'T SHARING SECRETS WHAT MAKES FRIENDSHIP GROW STRONGER?
I...
I THINK SOME SECRETS MAY SHINE BRIGHTER WHEN THEY ARE KEPT LOCKED IN YOUR HEART...
UHN
UHN
UH
SHIMMER
DON'T YOU WANNA KNOW MY SECRET?
MMM

I REALLY WANT TO TELL YOU ALL MY SECRET. ☆
I'M SURE THE SMOOTH ACIDITY OF IT WILL TAKE YOU CAPTIVE AS WELL.
DRIP
SHAKE
SHAKE
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
JAPANESE MAYONNAISE IS NOW POPULAR AROUND THE WORLD.
NOOOOOOO!
SQUIRRRRRT
BOLSTERED BY THE BOURGEOISIE LIVING THERE, IT IS NOW EVEN PRODUCED IN MANY SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES...


ALL RIGHT THEN!! I'LL GIVE YOU A HINT. ☆
THAT'S... UH... KANAKO-SAN...?
ALLOW ME TO FINISH THAT STATEMENT.
SHE HAS A SPARE?!
FWIP

OH, MATSURIKA-CHAN... AND MARIYA-CHAN.
SORRY TO INTERRUPT SUCH A PLEASANT CHAT. ♡


TO START WITH, THE GRAIN VINEGAR THAT IS AT THE BASE OF JAPANESE MAYONNAISE GIVES IT A VERY STRONG ACIDIC TASTE, WHICH IS POPULAR...
AND ALTHOUGH AMERICAN MAYONNAISE IS MADE USING THE WHOLE EGG, HERE IT IS MADE USING ONLY THE YOLK, WHICH REALLY BRINGS OUT THE FLAVOR.

I didn't know that!
IT MUST BE THE HEALTH CRAZE RIGHT NOW THAT'S MAKING EVERYONE WANT TO TRY HEALTHY JAPANESE FOOD!
ANOTHER THING WHICH HELPS MAKE IT SO POPULAR IS THE UNIQUE STAR-SHAPED NOZZLE FROM WHICH IT IS SQUEEZED.
THIS NOZZLE HAS GIVEN IT THE REPUTATION OF BEING EASY TO USE, ALLOWING YOU TO DECORATE WITH IT, AS IF IT WERE WHIPPED CREAM.
THE REASON MY SKIN IS SO SMOOTH IS...
WELL, I'M SURE YOU'VE FIGURED IT OUT BY NOW.
AND WHAT REALLY BRINGS OUT THE SPLENDID FLAVOR OF JAPANESE FOOD IS THE EGG-COLORED MAGIC KNOWN AS...
BANG
POP
...THIS! IT ALL COMES FROM MAYO-

NANAMI-CHAAAAN!
ARE YOU OKAY?!
DOES ANYTHING HURT?
MOMOI-SAN...
...IS MY LENSE... SAFE?
YOUR LENSE...?

NANAMI-CHAN... YOUR EYES, HAVE THEY...
Y-YEAH...
...IT'S FINE.
YOUR LENSE IS A-OKAY....
HEH...
YOU TELL SUCH SWEET LIES...
THANK YOU.
I'M REALLY GLAD TO HAVE... MET...
THUMP...!
YOU...
NANAMI-CHAN?!
SWAY
HAVE...
うぁぁぁぁ
NANAMI-CHA~N!
NOOOOO!

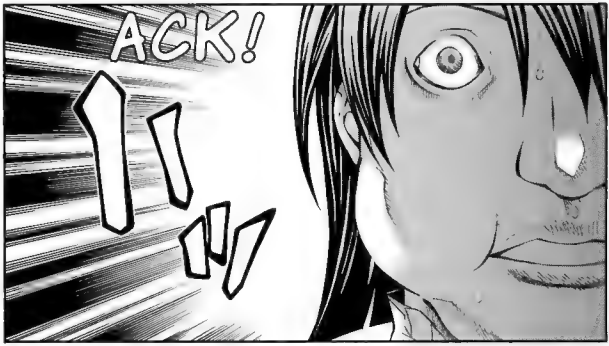
I THINK IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU SNAP BACK TO REALITY AND TAKE A LOOK AT A SCALE, KANAKO-SAN...
YUZURU ...
SAN?
FLUMP
ぽよん

HAVE MY BOOBS GOTTEN BIGGER AGAIN...
PSK
ぷすっ

SQUEEZE
むにっ
にゅにゅ
SQUISH

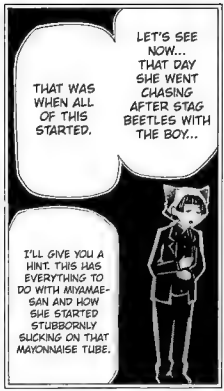
SQUISH
にゅむっ

にゅむっ
SQUISH


ACK!

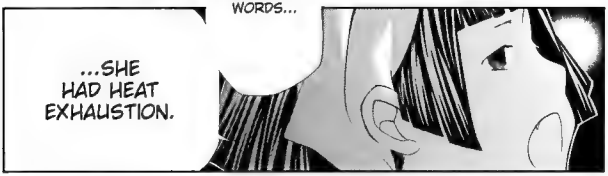
I DON'T FEEL LIKE MYSELF IF I DON'T WEAR SOMETHING ON MY HEAD.
HYAN!
YOU SAID... YOU SAID YOUR NAME WAS YONA IZUMI-KUUUUUN?
Oh...

WELL, GIVE IT SOME LOOOOONG THOUGHT.
OH, I SUPPOSE YOU DON'T.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHERE THIS IS GOING NOW?
THIS MESSAGE CAME FROM THE HOUSE MOTHER OF GIRLS' DORM NUMBER TWO.


LET'S SEE NOW... THAT DAY SHE WENT CHASING AFTER STAG BEETLES WITH THE BOY...
THAT WAS WHEN ALL OF THIS STARTED.
I'LL GIVE YOU A HINT. THIS HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH MIYAMAE-SAN AND HOW SHE STARTED STUBBORNLY SUCKING ON THAT MAYONNAISE TUBE.

...WELL, I'VE HEARD THAT THE CITRIC ACID FOUND IN THINGS LIKE VINEGAR AND FRUIT...
...CAN BE VERY HELPFUL IN AIDING THE BODY TO RECOVER FROM EXHAUSTION.

I MEAN, DOESN'T EVERYONE WANT SOMETHING SOUR WHEN THEY START TO FEEL EXHAUSTION SET IN?
SO WHEN KANAKO-SAN STARTED TO FEEL EXHAUSTION SET IN FROM RUNNING AROUND IN THE MIDDAY SUMMER HEAT...
...HER BODY OF COURSE STARTED TO CRY OUT IN PAIN.


IN OTHER WORDS...
...SHE HAD HEAT EXHAUSTION.

WOOF!
HEH HEH... OH, HOUSE MOTHER.
URGH...

MAYONNAISE HAS THREE MAIN INGREDIENTS; EGG, OIL AND VINEGAR...
THUS KANAKO-SAN FELL MADLY IN LOVE WITH THE ACIDITY AND RANDOMLY STARTED TO SUCK ON THE MAYONNAISE TUBE IN HER OVERHEATED STATE.
THAT'S RIGHT.
SHE FELL INTO THE TRAP THAT IS THE SOUR-SWEET TASTE FOUND IN ACIDIC FOODS.

I HOPE THAT ALL OF YOU WILL TRY YOUR BEST TO EAT A BALANCED DIET AND NOT GET STUCK ON ONE SPECIFIC FOOD!
WE WILL!
ONE MIGHT THINK THAT HEAT EXHAUSTION WOULD CAUSE YOU TO LOSE WEIGHT...
...BUT THE REALITY IS THAT IT CAN CAUSE YOUR BASE METABOLISM TO FALL MUCH LOWER THAN IT MIGHT USUALLY BE, EVEN IN THE WINTER. AND THAT CAUSES MANY PEOPLE TO GROW FAAAAT.
NOW, OCCASIONALLY SUCKING DOWN A TUBE OF MAYO MAY NOT BE ALL THAT BAD.
BUT AS THE SAYING GOES, "YOU CAN HAVE TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING."
I'M SO SORRY THAT YOU HAVE TO DO THIS FOR ME...
SOB
しょぼ...
MAKE SURE YOU CHEW IT WEEEELL...
ALL RIGHT... I HAVE PREPARED A SPECIAL MEAL JUST FOR YOU, MIYAMAE-SAN.
I USED VERY LITTLE OIL SO IT'S LOW IN CAAAALORIES.
SST
SST
SSST

SO GOOD...
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT! IT IS MY JOB AS THE HOUSE MOTHER TO LOOK AFTER EACH AND EVERY STUDENT'S HEALTH, AFTER ALL!
GOD IS GOD TO EVERYONE AROUND!
SLUUURP
HNG
HOUSE MOTHER...
DRIP
GULP

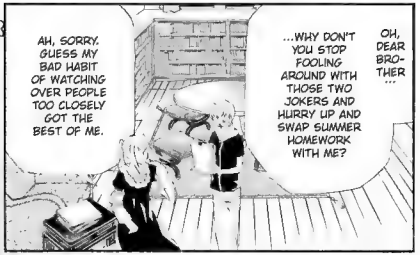
Prayer41
Some Things Can't be Rushed and Sometimes You've Got to Take a Break

CHARA CHA CHA CHA. CHARA CHA-
CHARA CHA CHA CHA. CHARA CHA-
CHARA CHA-RA RA RACHA
CHA CHA CHA

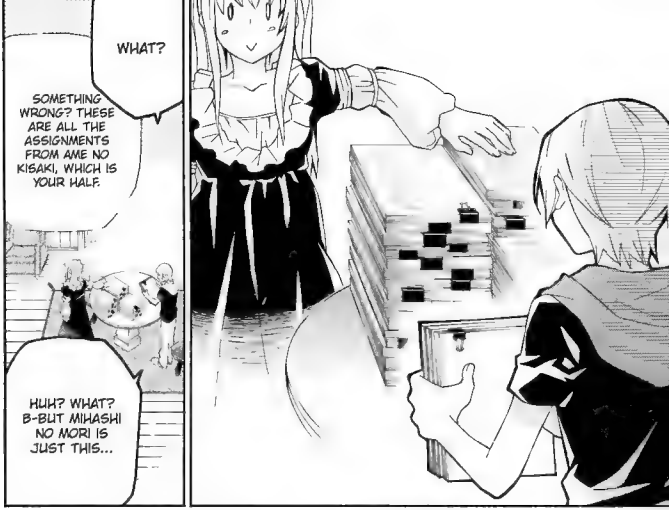
...WHY ARE YOU HUMMING?
I'M JUST A BOY FROM A POOR FAMILY, SO I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT WOULD BE SUITABLE BACKGROUND MUSIC FOR THE HOUSE OF A RICH PERSON.
Oh, I'm very sorry
I WASN'T COMPLAINING ABOUT YOUR CHOICE OF SONG!
MY SONG, IT WAS "SPRING" FROM THE COMPOSER ANTONIO VIVALDI'S FAMOUS "SEASONS."

AND DON'T YOU ADD TO IT WITH YOUR PIRO-PIROS, MATSURIKA!
PI PIRO PI PI PI
HYORI~N HYORI~N HYORI~N HYO~RIN
DON'T YOU DARE ADD IN SNAPPING TO THAT ARRANGE-MENT!
CHARA CHA CHA CHA CHARACHA
SNAP
SNAP
SNAP
SNAP
SNAP

FLUTTER
HERE IS YOUR PART.
FLAP
FLUTTER
FLAP


AH, SORRY. GUESS MY BAD HABIT OF WATCHING OVER PEOPLE TOO CLOSELY GOT THE BEST OF ME.
...WHY DON'T YOU STOP FOOLING AROUND WITH THOSE TWO JOKERS AND HURRY UP AND SWAP SUMMER HOMEWORK WITH ME?
OH, DEAR BRO-THER ...

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT, SHIZU.
WE ALMOST NEVER HAVE ANY TIME TOGETHER WHAT WITH YOUR SUMMER CLASSES AND ARCHERY CLUB BEING SO BUSY LEADING UP TO THE INTER-HIGH SCHOOL TOURNAMENT.
WELL, LET'S GET STARTED ON OUR ASSIGNMENTS RIGHT AWAY.
WE'VE GOT TO USE IT MORE EFFICIENTLY.


WHAT?
SOMETHING WRONG? THESE ARE ALL THE ASSIGNMENTS FROM AME NO KISAKI, WHICH IS YOUR HALF.
HUH? WHAT? B-BUT MIHASHI NO MORI IS JUST THIS...

YOU'RE ALWAYS PLAYING TRICKS LIKE THIS ON ME.
SUMMER HOLIDAY
夏休
SUPER FUN MATH
OH!!!
YOU'RE JUST PULLING MY LEG, AREN'T YOU?!

CHARA CHA CHA CHA. CHARA CHA
CHARARA CHA CHA. RARA CHA
WELL, I'M GLAD YOU UNDERSTAND.
I GUESS... I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.
DO YOU REALLY THINK I'D TAKE THE TIME TO MAKE THIS PILE OF FAKE HOMEWORK FOR YOU?
WHAT BENEFIT WOULD THERE BE IN ME TELLING A LIE LIKE THAT?

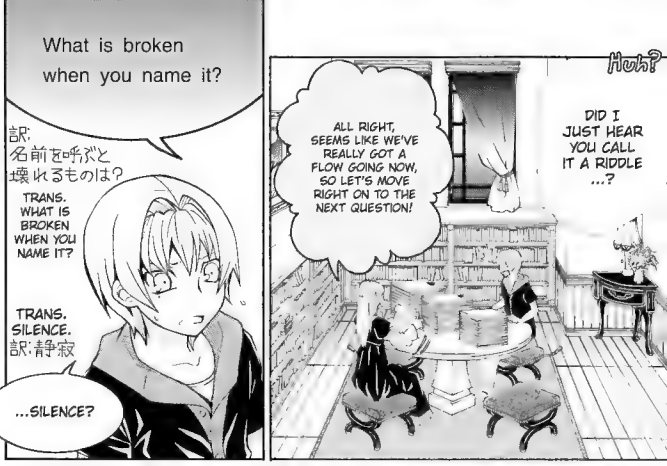
CHARA CHA RACHA CHARA CHA
DOOLU DOOLU DOOLU. DOOLU DOOLU DOOLU. DOOLU DOOLU DOOLU.
WHEN ALL THIS STARTED, WE PROMISED THAT THINGS LIKE TESTS, HOMEWORK... ANYTHING THAT WILL BE KEPT ON RECORD, WOULD BE DONE BY THE PERSON FOR WHOM IT WAS INTENDED.
TRUE, AND THE ONE WHO SHOULD BE GOING TO AME NO KISAKI GIRLS' SCHOOL IS ME.
DON'T WORRY, I'LL PROPERLY TAKE CARE OF MY PART.

キラ
SHIMMER
YOU KNOW... THERE IS A BREED OF CRIMINALS IN THIS WORLD WHO TAKE DELIGHT IN HOW PEOPLE REACT TO THEIR CRIMES AND WILL EVEN GO OUT OF THEIR WAY TO TELL LIES THAT MAY BE OF NO BENEFIT TO THEM.
CHARA CHA CHA CHA...

RUSTLE
ペラ…
AND, SINCE YOU'VE IMPRESSED ME WITH THAT SIDE OF YOU, I'LL BE NICE AND READ OFF THE QUESTIONS FOR YOU.
WELL, MY DEAR LITTLE SISTER, YOU ARE THE ADMIRABLE ONE.

NUMBER ONE
"IF YOU PROJECT GOD ONTO A MIRROR, WHAT IS REFLECTED BACK AT YOU?"
HUH?
IT'S A RIDDLE... ISN'T IT?
NO, IT'S MODERN JAPANESE.
IT SORTA SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING YOU'D FIND ON THE FIRST ROUND OF EXAMS TO BECOME A CIVIL SERVANT.
IT IS A RIDDLE, RIGHT?
STOP ASKING STUPID QUESTIONS AND JUST ANSWER IT!
"IF YOU PROJECT GOD ONTO A MIRROR, WHAT IS REFLECTED BACK AT YOU?"
Let's see...
WHEN YOU REFLECT SOMETHING ONTO A MIRROR, THE IMAGE YOU SEE IS REVERSED.
GOD
DOG
SO, THEN GOD IS... WELL, IN ENGLISH "GOD" SAID BACKWARDS IS "DOG"...
...SO THE ANSWER SHOULD BE "DOG."
VERY GOOD, THAT MAKES PERFECT SENSE.

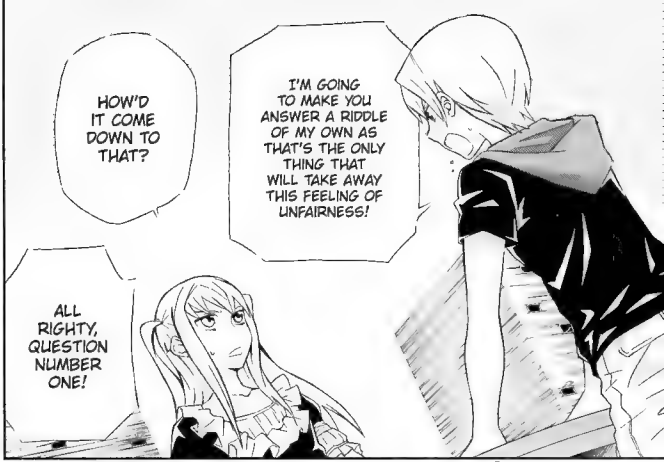
fang fang zheng zheng yi kuai rou
方方正正一塊肉
bai bai zhen zhen mei gu tou
白白淨淨沒骨頭
CHINESE?!
"FANG FANG ZHENG ZHENG YI KUAI ROW. BAI BAI ZHEN ZHEN MEI GU TOU"...
...IS THE QUESTION.
CONTINUING ON TO NUMBER TWO...
"...THAT IS PERFECTLY WHITE AND HAS NO BONES." YOU KNOW...
TRANSLATED INTO JAPANESE THE QUESTION IS "WHAT'S A QUADRANGLE-SHAPED LUMP OF MEAT..."
...THIS IS WHAT YOU COULD CONSIDER A POETIC RIDDLE, ONE THAT YOU CAN REALLY ENJOY THE RHYTHM OF.
IN CHINESE, IT'D BE CALLED A "MI YU."
THAT'S... A MODERN CHINESE QUESTION, ...RIGHT?
YEAH
THE PROFESSOR IS FROM FRANCE, THOUGH.
OH, AND THE ANSWER IS "TOFU."
THE ANSWER IS INDEED "TOFU."


What is broken when you name it?
訳:名前を呼ぶと壊れるものは?
TRANS. WHAT IS BROKEN WHEN YOU NAME IT?
TRANS. SILENCE. 訳:静寂
...SILENCE?
Huh?
DID I JUST HEAR YOU CALL IT A RIDDLE ...?
ALL RIGHT, SEEMS LIKE WE'VE REALLY GOT A FLOW GOING NOW, SO LET'S MOVE RIGHT ON TO THE NEXT QUESTION!

I-I...
PASS.
TRANS. WHAT HAS NO MOUTH BUT ALWAYS TELLS THE TRUTH?
Qu'est ce qui n'a pas de bouche et dit cependant la verite a tout le monde ?
訳:口は無いけど語ることが皆に真実をいうのは何?

THAI? UHH... UM...
TRANS. WHAT GETS LONGER AND LONGER THE MORE YOU CUT IT? 訳:切れば切るほど長くなるものはなんでしょう?
อะไรเอ่ย...ยิ่งตัดยิ่งยาว

Oh?
I THOUGHT WE WERE DOING YOUR (SORTA) HOMEWORK.
YOU'RE JUST PRETENDING TO READ THE QUESTIONS, YOU MEANIE!
YOU REALLY ARE BEING QUITE MEAN, MARIYA-SAMA.
LISTENING TO YOU JUST NOW WAS LIKE HEARING SOME COMMANDER SAFE IN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS GIVE ORDERS TO HIS SOLDIERS ON THE FRONT LINES...
HOWEVER, ON THE BATTLEFIELD, ONE IS NEITHER SUPERIOR NOR SUBORDINATE.
ALTHOUGH EACH SOLDIER MAY PLAY A DIFFERENT ROLE, NONE OF THEM CAN LIVE WITHOUT THE OTHER.
SORRY TO SAY THAT IT'S JUST A METAPHOR I MADE UP...
YOUR METAPHORS NEVER MAKE ANY SENSE. FROM WHAT YOU SAID, I'M NOT BEING MEAN AT ALL.
TAP
ス...


I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU ANSWER A RIDDLE OF MY OWN AS THAT'S THE ONLY THING THAT WILL TAKE AWAY THIS FEELING OF UNFAIRNESS!
HOW'D IT COME DOWN TO THAT?
ALL RIGHTY, QUESTION NUMBER ONE!

"A PAN MAY STILL BE CALLED A PAN, BUT WHAT...
SLAM
KIND... OF-!!

BUT THERE'S NO WAY SHE'D USE THE OLD STANDARD OF "A PAN MAY STILL BE CALLED A PAN, BUT WHAT KIND OF PAN CANNOT BE EATEN?" AFTER CHALLENGING ME WITH THAT AMOUNT OF CONFIDENCE.
CRAP... I JUMPED IN TOO QUICKLY AND WAS ABOUT TO ANSWER WITH "A FRYING PAN!"
MORE THAN THAT, I CHOSE THE WRONG QUESTION, HANDS DOWN. WHY'D I CHOOSE SUCH A RIDICULOUSLY STANDARD RIDDLE THAT 75% OF JAPANESE CITIZENS WOULD EASILY ANSWER WITH "A FRYING PAN"?!
SHIT! I GOT OVER-EXCITED AND MADE A MISTAKE!
I'LL JUST HAVE TO FIND SOME WAY TO PLAY IT OFF...
THAT LOOK ON HIS FACE... HE'S REALLY THINKING HARD ABOUT THIS. THERE'S NO WAY I CAN FLAT-OUT STATE THAT I MADE A MISTAKE NOW.
THAT LOOK ON HER FACE... SHE'S DEAD SERIOUS ABOUT THIS MATCH.
A PAN MAY BE PAN BUT... WHAT?

I CAN'T LOOK TO CLUELESS RINDOU FOR ANY HELP.
WHAT DO I DO?
MAYBE, MATSURIKA?
HE REALLY DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE AN ANSWER!
SHE SAYS SHE KNOWS WHAT'S HAPPENING, BUT WON'T HELP ME!
CLENCH
ぐっ

SHIP
...HOLD THAT THOUGHT.
YOU CAN DO IT! YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN DO IT, DEAR BROTHER!
SHOVE
?!
DON'T TELL ME YOU KNOW?!
WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?
YES... I BELIEVE I KNOW THE ANSWER.

この橋渡るべからず
I must not ever cross this bridge.
"SO, INSTEAD OF CROSSING THE BRIDGE, HE WALKED GALLANTLY DOWN THE MIDDLE."

AND THAT IS HOW THE BATTLE OF WITS THE THREE WERE HAVING WAS BROUGHT TO AN ABRUPT END.
THE DAWN CAME, AND SUMMER VACATION ENDED. AND OUR DEAR HERO WOUND UP BARELY HAVING ATTENDED ENOUGH CLASSES TO NOT HAVE TO REPEAT A YEAR...
And everything was wonderful.
STOP MAKING UP STUPID ENDINGS!
WIT-A-HOLIC

MARIA HOLIC
Volume 7

KADOKAWA MANGA

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